

**The Modernisation of Elite British
Mountaineering: Entrepreneurship,
Commercialisation and the Career Climber,
1953-2000**

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Abstract

This thesis examines how economic pressures reshaped British mountaineering in the decades following the first ascent of Everest. Between 1953 and 2000 the sport was transformed, beginning with the dismantling of amateur pressures by which it had previously been defined. This allowed entrepreneurial ideas to flourish as some individuals began pursuing the opportunity to earn, turning climbing from leisure into a form of work. Their efforts relied on the specialist and mainstream media which they harnessed to successfully expand interest in them as personalities, and in mountaineering more widely. As the sport became increasingly well-known, it attracted corporate interests in the form of sponsorship and branding, which facilitated grander expeditions. These adjustments expanded mainstream interest, and eventually combined to create a new form of guided climbing focussed on the Himalaya.

Although British mountaineering has often been analysed from a perspective of national identity, this thesis demonstrates how economics was responsible for the modernisation it experienced, with financial imperatives becoming a prime motivation for climbers. Indeed, it became increasingly individualistic as careers came to depend on climbing success. The process of change led to debates about what it meant to climbing ethically, and there was resistance to the shift which ultimately adjusted the wider portrayal and understanding of the sport.

The study uses extensive archival materials, magazines, expedition reports and other contemporary literature to examine how professional, entrepreneurial and commercial pressures combined to increase the mainstream appeal of mountaineering. Analysis of key expeditions, as well as the experiences of key figures such as Chris Bonington, Joe Brown, Alison Hargreaves and others, illustrates how the realities of being an elite British climber were transformed in the post-war years. In doing so, this detailed economic history of mountaineering demonstrates a new understanding of post-war sports commercialisation. It shows that some of the factors commonly associated to this change in other sports, such as governance, were not always prerequisites for such modernisation.

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Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AC	Alpine Club
ACG	Alpine Climbing Group
AMA	Army Mountaineering Association
BGA	Barclays Group Archives
BMC	British Mountaineering Council
BMG	British Mountain Guides
CCPR	Central Council of Physical Recreation
ISM	International School of Mountaineering
IT	Information Technology
MEC	Mount Everest Committee
MEF	Mount Everest Foundation
MHT	Mountain Heritage Trust
RGS	Royal Geographical Society

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In 1957 a young Chris Bonington (1934 -) wrote in a letter to his mother that “I think I shall try to take up climbing professionally. It is a thing I love, and a thing I am good at, even if it does not lead very far”.¹ Bonington would become arguably Britain’s best-known mountaineer, but this success seemed remote at best when he set out his plans. At the time Bonington wrote there were significant changes underway in how mountaineering was governed, practiced, how it applied technology, and in what was regarded as acceptable. Much of this was driven by a modernising society which created new interests and opportunities for climbers. Over the years that followed, Bonington carved a career out of his passion and, along with a small number of other British climbers, contributed to a rapid modernisation of the sport.

This thesis explores how elite British mountaineering was reimagined during the second half of the twentieth century, as a result of new economic pressures and opportunities. Widespread changes in both British society and global relations during this period transformed the practices of mainstream and niche sport. However, many of the economic and financial activities that became an intrinsic part of elite mountaineering like commercial partnerships, guiding and the pursuit of publicity, have been relatively neglected in the academic literature. This thesis uses new archival sources and a wealth of popular and specialist literature to examine the significance of this period in reshaping British mountaineering, what it meant to be an elite mountaineer such as Bonington, and how the sport was more widely consumed.

This thesis examines four overlapping, but distinct, trends each revising earlier approaches to mountaineering. Firstly, the post-war period saw a major departure from prior mountaineering norms. The previous amateur framework, including its governance arrangements, was dismantled and this freed climbers up to act in new ways. Some began to see themselves as professionals as they broke

¹ Letter from Chris Bonington to Helen Bonington, July 1, 1957, Mountain Heritage Trust (hereafter MHT), CBO/04/01/02.

free from the previously restrictive ethos. Importantly, it broadened out the type of person who could become an elite climber. This led to significant growth in individual entrepreneurial activity – the second theme of this thesis. Climbing personalities found new media markets for mountaineering stories and for their own character brands. This was sometimes aided by others connected to the sport, though it was typically the climbers themselves who pursued new opportunities. Profit was not always the most significant motivation, despite the increasing number of revenue streams which successful entrepreneurs could exploit. For some, adventure changed from being primarily a leisure pursuit into multiple forms of work.

Thirdly, the changing media in the period altered how the sport was understood by an increasingly interested public. Whilst mountaineering expeditions had historically been extensively reported, mainly through newspapers and related formats such as newsreels, new approaches to publicity and the use of different forms of modern media adjusted both the value and type of mountaineering content produced by the new entrepreneurs. Fourthly, new forms of commercial activity saw corporate interests from sometimes unlikely sources introduced to mountaineering and playing a significant enabling role. Corporate sponsorship became common, as did increasingly complex financial arrangements that were put in place to support costly expeditions.

Developments in these four areas came quickly following the first ascent of Everest in 1953.² This famous climb marked the end of an old era of mountaineering. Though the four converging economic, cultural and social changes were more or less prominent at different times, their combined influence altered mountaineering irreversibly. It became more individualistic as personal benefits overrode motivations of national pride. Significantly, the sport moved from being an, often inward-looking, sub-culture into one that sought a mainstream interest in terms of both accessibility and public understanding. While mountaineering has never been a frequent item on the national news agenda,

² Edmund Hillary, *The View from the Summit*, (London: BCA, 1999).

significant achievements, noteworthy expeditions and personal tragedies have led it to achieve sporadic intense coverage. This did not fundamentally change – mountaineering remains a niche sport – though entrepreneurial climbers found ways of developing greater interest in their pursuit as a way of raising their own profiles. Differing demands and consumption through the media led to more sensationalised coverage with a growing emphasis on the climbers and their activities, rather than the challenges they took on. This culminated in the creation of a new form of the sport that enabled non-climbers to purchase guided trips to the revered sites of earlier elite mountaineers on the world’s highest peaks. The sport did not change completely though. While new motivations and ethical positions did adapt in line with adjusting climbing norms, there was significant continuity and dialogue between the old and the new forms of the sport.

Particularly significant for the history of sport and leisure as an academic discipline, the findings from this thesis demonstrate that some uncommon factors exhibited in mountaineering – notably the absence of relevant governance, and short but intense media interest – did not prevent it from evolving in a similar way to other popular sports during the post-war period. Indeed, as will be argued, the absence of a central controlling force allowed a small group of entrepreneurial climbers to lead change in a nimble way that accelerated mountaineering’s modernisation. Such swift and continuous development could only emerge because of the changes in wider British society, such as debates about meritocracy and the opportunities for individuals in an increasingly globalised market.³

There have been notable sporting moments as well as dominant features at different times in the post-war period. As this thesis will show, there were three identifiable eras with varying characteristics, though in combination they left an activity that was wholly different from its

³ See, for instance, Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, (London: Penguin, 1996); Brian Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom 1951-1970*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011).

traditional roots. These eras – initially outlined below – provide a chronological framework, and chapter structure, for this study.

The period between the first ascent of Everest and 1969 – the focus of Chapter Two – was one in which mountaineering began to overtly and consistently shift into commercial territory. Everest was climbed in 1953 for the first time and has been widely regarded as an important sporting moment based on the ‘Everest mania’ it created.⁴ It was an important national event in an otherwise pessimistic period. This climb was simultaneously the high-point of amateur success and the beginning of the end of such influence. Traditional bodies like the Alpine Club which represented British mountaineers since its inception in 1857, were pressured to reform and found their prominence considerably marginalised – a trend that would only accelerate as the century wore on. Following Everest, the sport was attracting public interest and as its profile was raised higher, climbers and their stories were more in demand. A small group of mountaineers deliberately sought to capitalise on this, forging personal brands and earning an income from lectures, books and making connections with the media. Newspapers were the main sponsors of typically Alpine expeditions in these years, supplementing a grant system that was more modest than the pre-Everest period, whilst television began to offer rich opportunity for raising a personal profile and reaching new audiences. The individuals driving this change were deliberately pursuing mountaineering as both leisure *and* work – a blend that had occurred before, but as an exception rather than as a rule. In a further sign of the declining amateur influence, these pressures encouraged climbers to be more individualistic rather than adopt the collective efforts that characterised prior decades. Although the opportunities to earn through climbing were somewhat limited compared with the 1970s, the impetus from the Everest climb led to significant shifts in the sport and the foundation was laid for later years.

⁴ Mick Conefrey, *Everest 1953: The Epic Story of the First Ascent*, (London: Oneworld, 2013), 34.

A 1970 expedition to Annapurna launched the next era that carried through to 1985 – covered in Chapter Three. This was the first of a handful of large-scale Himalayan expeditions that caught the public’s attention during these years. It was a marked change from the prior decade in that expeditions were now successfully pitched to corporations who might benefit from association with a climb. Airlines, banks and camera makers began to replace newspapers as main expedition sponsors, seeking the publicity, sometimes on an international scale, that was created. These occasionally very generous sources of funding facilitated the high-profile and eye-catching climbs, in turn creating even greater personalities of those mountaineers involved. Most prominent was a 1975 expedition to Mount Everest that was backed by Barclays Bank, a company that might seem unusual as a mountaineering sponsor, and this climb exemplified the new model that elite mountaineering operated within. Individuals like Bonington, Doug Scott (1941 -) and Dougal Haston (1940 - 1977) who participated in many of these climbs became household names, though the nature of the high-profile Himalayan expedition meant a raised degree of collective effort, even if some were mindful of their individual earning potential. Their increasing prominence meant these climbers sometimes advertised mainstream products, whilst expanding their lecturing, writing and photography offerings to generate income. This was not professionalisation in the sense of direct payment for work, but increasingly professional attitudes and perspectives were visible.⁵ Although some voices of discontent could be heard, the steady decline of amateurism continued. The popular large-scale expeditions were relatively short lived but even when they were succeeded by smaller scale climbs, corporations retained an interest.

⁵ Porter and Smith note the difficulties of defining amateurism and professionalism. For instance, they explain how the definitions “were rooted in lived experience, contingent on class and status, and subject to change over time. An amateur was expected to participate for the love of the game, whereas a professional received some form of payment, but in practice it was rather more complicated”, before going on to give examples of how the distinction did not live up to these criteria. Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, ‘Introduction’, in Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, eds., *Amateurs and Professionals in Post-War British Sport*, (London: Frank Cass, 2000), viii – ix.

The final era from 1985 to 2000, dealt with in Chapter Four, started with a significant event in world mountaineering. The first guided client ascent of Everest took place in 1985, effectively placing a client climber on the roof of the world. Although no Briton was involved in this specific climb it was nonetheless an important watershed, marking the first completion of the 'Seven Summits' – an ascent of the highest point on each continent – by one person. The successful climb by a paying client heralded the emergence of a major change in the type of person who could be found in the greater ranges. These landscapes, including the Himalayas and Karakorum, had hitherto been the reserve of a small elite group. Indeed, so marked was the change throughout the 1990s that it became client climbers who encountered more commercial opportunities – a disruptive shift that affected elite climbers. Mass-media interest increased as novelties were sometimes blatantly pursued to attract publicity, occasionally at the expense of genuinely new mountaineering challenges. This led to a much more competitive environment for elite mountaineers who found sponsorship opportunities being shared, and genuine climbing ability less significant for creating earning potential. Entrepreneurial endeavours continued to connect new industries and ideas such as Information Technology (IT) to mountaineering in ways that could make it appealing to the public. Yet gimmicks and novelties led the public to perceive climbing in a new way, bringing a more fleeting interest. Other new opportunities presented themselves as elite mountaineers could become guides to these new clients, and this was often based around new guiding companies which perpetuated this new form of mountaineering. It had become an experience that people not only wanted to watch but also to participate in, and this epitomised its transformation into a sport that sought to appeal not to its own sub-culture, but to the mainstream.

This thesis will detail a fundamental transformation in elite British mountaineering that occurred in the period between the ascent of Everest and the turn of the millennium; a transformation that has previously received only scant attention from academics. Whilst there is a relatively large body of literature focusing on post-War British mountaineering – writing that has nonetheless helped contextualise and shape this thesis – little direct focus has been given to examining the economic

influences on mountaineering and how wider commercial and financial developments changed the way that the sport as a whole was both practiced and perceived over a long time span.

Literature Review

In 1977, Alpine Club president Jack Longland highlighted the potential earning routes for climbers, several of which had only become feasible thanks to the post-war changes already underway. Longland remarked that within climbing:

There are genuine professionals, guides, instructors at mountain centres, climbers who endure great expeditions, and make a living by lecturing and writing about them afterwards.⁶

It is the latter group that are the prime focus of this research and who have been explored by other academics that have been attracted to the subject thanks to its diverse history, differing development internationally, and imperial and nationalistic connections.⁷ Sports historians are not alone in taking an interest, with several sociological studies building an improved understanding of the pressures on mountaineering and changes in its recent culture.

The predominant narrative within academic mountaineering history has revolved around class issues, as well as the connection with and imperialism and national identity.⁸ More recently though, there have been a growing number of contributions in less traditional aspects of the sport. Included amongst these have been a handful of studies into more economic matters in the post-war years. These have illustrated some of the intriguing ways in which mountaineering modernised, though they have primarily concentrated on specific individuals or events. By contrast, this research analyses the

⁶ Jack Longland, 'Valedictory Address', *Alpine Journal* 82 (1977), 8.

⁷ This climber group was also identified by Clark in Ronald Clark, *Men, Myths and Mountains*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1976), 266.

⁸ Peter L. Bayers, *Imperial Ascent: Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire*, (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2003); Peter Hansen, 'British Mountaineering, 1850 – 1914', (PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 1991); Peter H. Hansen, 'Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Journal of British Studies* 34, no. 3 (1995), 300-324.

evolution in economic areas such as professionalisation, expedition financing and entrepreneurial ideas across half a century of change. It builds on the more piece-meal collective findings of other academics and adds new areas of enquiry. Through this, the study reveals the changing phases and considerable developments that were made to the sport as a whole, adding new understanding to the transformation experienced in the post-war years. As such, it fits into the growing body of work analysing economic influences on sport, much of which has been a response to Stephen Hardy's 1986 call for greater understanding in this area.⁹

Unusually, one of the key texts most closely related to this area has examined two decades of change in the post-war years. David Potter's 2007 PhD thesis considers both how the culture of mountaineering adjusted between 1960 and 1980, and how and why it became commercialised. By focussing on the creation and popularity of *Mountain* magazine, Potter noted how the sport became increasingly accessible to the public and places this media – including how the media offered a potential revenue source for mountaineers – at the centre of the changes in commercial thinking.¹⁰ Potter explained how the growing 'mountaineering communication' profession was taken up by those at the leading edge of their sport helping to strengthen the links between the sport and private funding sources, especially the specialist press.¹¹ In explaining how these climbers earned, Potter also

⁹ Stephen Hardy, 'Entrepreneurs, Organizations, and the Sport Marketplace: Subjects in Search of Historians', *Journal of Sport History* 13, no. 1 (1986), 14-33. A growing number of sports historians heeded this call and sought to broaden out the discipline's interest, revealing sports importance to British society. Porter is amongst those to examine how professionalism was pursued, and attributed it to many factors including business, entrepreneurialism, and shifting cultural attitudes by sports governing bodies. Dilwyn Porter, 'More than a Game: Sport, Business and the Media in Britain since 1960', in *Cultural Industries in Britain and Germany: Sport, Music and Entertainment from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century*, eds. Christiane Eisenberg and Andreas Gestrich, (Augsburg: Wissner, 2012), 124-138; Dilwyn Porter, 'The End of the Amateur Hegemony in British Sport, c.1960-2000', *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies* 43, no. 2 (2011), 69-80; Dilwyn Porter, 'British Sport Transformed: Sport, Business, and the Media since 1960', in *Business in Britain in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Richard Coopey and Peter Lyth, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 330-355.

¹⁰ David Potter, 'British Exploratory Mountaineering in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century', (PhD Thesis, Nottingham University, 2007), 209.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 223.

highlighted the role of autobiography and expedition accounts, as well as looking at how they generated income by “designing and selling equipment... writing books and articles, lecturing, raising sponsorship for expeditions and appearing on advertisements”, concisely summarising the importance he attributed to effective communication skills, despite this not always sitting comfortably.¹² Potter reflects that growing commercialisation did not fundamentally affect the whole of the mountaineering community, explaining that:

Building a binary difference between commercial and non-commercial exploration may be too simple a model... funding undoubtedly had some effects on mountaineering, but not all the effects were necessarily negative. Commercial forces have not destroyed the culture of exploratory mountaineering, although some aspects have been altered by them.¹³

Fitted into a wider topic, Potter’s economic examination is necessarily broad. Discussions of topics such as how new markets that were established, the implications on mountaineering of greater commercial opportunity, and the reliance on other stakeholders – most prominently corporate entities and the mainstream press – are not within the scope of the work. As this thesis demonstrates though, these were at the heart of the acceleration in mountaineering’s modernisation – including before and after Potter’s date parameters – and changes in these pressures re-directed commercial pursuits in the sport.

The role of the media, especially newspapers, has been connected to climbing since the pre-war period and the ability to raise publicity has become a core requirement for most elite climbers. For Carol Osborne, the way that newspaper coverage shaped public perceptions was “instrumental in securing a prominent place in the public consciousness for high peak mountaineering”.¹⁴ In the pre-

¹² Ibid., 221-2, 256-260. See also p. 295 on Brown who was “embarrassed by fame, and publishing a book, particularly a memoir, was certain to increase this fame”.

¹³ Ibid., 313.

¹⁴ Carol Osborne, ‘Gender and the Organisation of British Climbing c.1857-1955’ (PhD Thesis, University of Lancaster, 2004), 363.

World War Two period this solidified the role of mountaineering as a recreation of national significance, and, as Osborne went on to note in a paper on sporting heroes, it would lead to the media setting a platform for specific climbers to do the same. Through her research into highly talented rock climber and later mountaineer Joe Brown (1930 -), she explained how, especially following his successes on Kanchenjunga in 1955 and in televised rock climbs, he was able to develop his media presence including television and radio work.¹⁵ Osborne concluded that Brown “showed little inclination towards cultivating a high public profile” and did so for financial career-related reasons rather than a desire to be seen as a celebrity.¹⁶ This case study of one of Britain’s most prominent climbers illustrates that public renown was important for Brown’s climbing career. This thesis illustrates that Brown’s experience was not unique, and explores the role of publicity and media skills for other elite climbers both during Brown’s era, and how it adapted later.

More widely, Porter has cited the role of media as pivotal in leading to modernising sports, a key component in the major fifty-year commercial transition he identified as being “completed” by the 1990s.¹⁷ Osborne’s work has explained how the media influenced the public perception of professional climbers, emphasising too that climbing was constructed and maintained as a male activity.¹⁸ Paul Gilchrist’s case study of Alison Hargreaves (1962 - 1995) highlights the sensationalisation of climbing reporting and the stereotypes that gender created towards the end of the 1990s, and it is one of several contributions from Gilchrist related to the media and post-war climbing.¹⁹

¹⁵ Carol Osborne, ‘An Extraordinary Joe: The Working-Class Climber as Hero’, in *Sporting Heroes of the North*, eds. Stephen Wagg and Dave Russell, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Northumbria Press, 2010), 48-70.

¹⁶ Ibid., 62.

¹⁷ Porter, ‘British Sport Transformed’, 346.

¹⁸ Osborne, ‘Gender and Organisation’, 12

¹⁹ Paul Gilchrist, “‘Motherhood, Ambition and Risk’: Mediating the Sporting Hero/ine in Conservative Britain’, *Media, Culture & Society* 29, no. 3 (2007), 395-414.

Reflecting the appeal of climbing to a nation of newly-seated television watchers, broadcasters aired rock climbing events in the 1960s. This was a result of, as Cashmore has put it, the “marriage made in heaven” of television and sport.²⁰ Most notable of these was a climb on the ‘Old Man of Hoy’, an Orkney sea-stack, and the subject of another key text by Gilchrist. In this he examined televised climbing in the 1960s, which culminated in the TV spectacle of the 1967 ascent of the Old Man of Hoy by a team of British climbers and broadcast by the BBC. He highlighted the extensive coverage sought for this ascent, and contrasts this against both the attempts by the Mount Everest Committee (MEC),²¹ to “stifle all publicity relating to the Everest attempts of the 1920s”, and the modest perspective of the Everest summiteers in 1953 who did not talk up their own achievements, but played them down.²² The climb on the Old Man of Hoy was very different and Gilchrist’s primary research reveals not only how climbing had captured real public appeal through television, but also the benefits, including payments, this brought to climbers themselves.²³ This event has a firm place in British climbing history, and its significance for the sport as well as for the climber’s profiles should not be underestimated. It illustrates the importance of effective publicity and media attention in ensuring the commercial success of a sport, a topic subject to a wider assessment by Hardy, Norman and Sceery.²⁴

The climb’s coverage, which drew many millions of viewers, gave the individuals involved excellent opportunities to make themselves known and Gilchrist’s work is important in regarding climbers as paid performers, especially as this event neatly encapsulates how climbing was changing. Anything similar to this in previous years would have been unheard of, but the new perspectives on climbing, the opportunities greater publicity brought, and the more flexible ethos in climbing circles all changed

²⁰ Ellis Cashmore, *Making Sense of Sport*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 357-384.

²¹ The Mount Everest Committee later became known as Joint Himalayan Committee, sometimes referred to as simply the Himalayan Committee. For consistency, the Mount Everest Committee (MEC) is used.

²² Paul Gilchrist, ‘Reality TV on the Rock Face - Climbing the Old Man of Hoy’, *Sport in History* 27, no. 1 (2007), 46-7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁴ Stephen Hardy, Brian Norman, and Sarah Sceery, ‘Towards a History of Sport Branding’, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 4, no. 4 (2012), 482-509.

in a short period of time enabling such an event to take place. The climb also hinted at the findings of Johnston and Edwards whose literature analysis from a tourism and leisure perspective found that “Climbing motivations have become increasingly complex, with economic concerns playing a more central role”.²⁵ Whilst the scope of the authors’ work is limited they explain how, with increased reliance on publicity came greater effort in attracting interest through novelty, gimmicks or a “curious angle”, a change which is argued in this thesis has led to a substantial shift in how mountaineering is portrayed to and understood by the wider public.²⁶

J. A. Walter attributed the public interest in mountaineering to a different factor – the lurking prospect of death amongst climbers. Referencing well-known climbers such as Haston and Mick Burke, Walter explained how perception amongst viewers varied, particularly in terms of whether their deaths were regarded as heroic. He noted that:

Television and written accounts provide an excellent close-up of death on the mountains. In accounts of ascents of the Eiger or of Himalayan peaks, the climax is either the summit or death... Just because an expedition failed to reach the top does not mean that the film or book of the climb may not be a best seller, for death is as readable a climax as success.²⁷

Walter discussed the potential for death as a significant motivation for viewers, but the evidence in this thesis indicates that climbers intentionally expanded the curiosity or appeal of mountaineering much more widely, largely in response to commercial pressures.

This is associated to how the sport was imagined by the public, and links to discussions by Christopher Lasch who, in explaining how sports have needed to be increasingly mindful of the viewer, recognised

²⁵ Barbara R. Johnston and Ted Edwards, ‘The Commodification of Mountaineering’, *Annals of Tourism Research* 21, no. 3 (1994), 473.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 466.

²⁷ J. A. Walter, ‘Death as Recreation: Armchair Mountaineering’, *Leisure Studies* 3, no. 1 (1984), 70-1.

that one of the implications included making followers more “sensation minded”.²⁸ Taken a step further, Sewart has explained that once “sport becomes a commodity governed by market principles there is little or no regard for its intrinsic content or form”, going on to explore how “market mentality has intruded into and subsequently debauched various sports”.²⁹ Although a strong assertion, it is irrefutable that new business and commercial pressures did lead to changes in many sports, and this may not always have been regarded as positive. By using a lengthy time period, this thesis shows how the wider portrayal of mountaineering was significantly changed, as a result of such economic factors.

The post-war links between climbers, manufacturers and retailers is another aspect of commercial activity in the sport, and is explored by business historian, Mary Rose, and former equipment manufacturer, Mike Parsons. Their *Invisible on Everest* opened up a new chapter in mountaineering history, and has parallels with George Sage’s emerging research into the role of sports goods as “an important component of the increasing commercialisation of sport”.³⁰ Martin Polley has also recognised the role of sporting goods in *Moving the Goalposts*, positing several specific signs that a sport is involved in more commercial activity including competition sponsorship, event advertising and professional endorsement of products.³¹ Trevor Slack has made similar contributions.³²

Helped by the insightful author combination, *Invisible on Everest* revealed the potential for other historians looking beyond the traditional topics in this sport. Much of *Invisible on Everest* concentrates

²⁸ Christopher Lasch, ‘The Corruption of Sports’, *The New York Review*, April 28 1977, online <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1977/apr/28/the-corruption-of-sports/> (accessed August 19, 2015).

²⁹ John J. Sewart, ‘The Commodification of Sport’, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 22, no. 3 (1987), 172.

³⁰ George H. Sage, ‘The Sporting Goods Industry: From Struggling Entrepreneurs to National Businesses to Transnational Corporations’, in *The Commercialisation of Sport*, ed. Trevor Slack, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 29.

³¹ Martin Polley, *Moving the Goalposts: A History of Sport and Society in Britain since 1945*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 63.

³² Slack has explained how commercialised activity could relate to the links between sport and business, notably the involvement of sponsorship, logos, product advertising, broadcasting and other coverage, and this thesis will illustrate how many of these ideas featured prominently in post-war British climbing. Trevor Slack, ‘Prologue’, in Slack, *The Commercialisation of Sport*, xxii – xxx.

on the nineteenth-century and pre-World War Two period, but from a post-war commercial aspect they provide evidence of how the growing notoriety of experienced mountaineers was capitalised on by manufacturers who realised the benefits of associating with these athletes, and using their design input.³³ They noted for instance how rucksacks were named after Joe Brown, and harnesses after Don Whillans (1933 - 1985) in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁴ In a later unpublished paper they extended their analysis to highlight the importance of Bonington becoming a Berghaus sponsor.³⁵ This research helps to explain the importance of well-known elite climbers for promotional purposes, especially as outdoor sports generally became more popular. For climbers who were seeking to earn their way within the sport, such personal sponsorship and endorsement of sporting goods was vital to their recognition and success, though the opportunity and application differed for others, sometimes in less prominent ways, and by exploring this variation this thesis establishes its significance for other hopeful career climbers.

Aside from the academic work mentioned thus far, mountaineering has always been a very literate sport. Producing articles and books since the mid-1800s, it is no surprise to find a wealth of personal climbing accounts, biographies and autobiographies of the participants, with a number focussing on the post-war years. These are often important contributions to the literature. For instance, the writings from Jim Perrin in his biography of Don Whillans, and Joe Brown's autobiography, explain how there were differences in how the sport was developing among different social groups, but at the same time there were moments where class structures were broken down.³⁶ Chris Bonington's own books about his career, the insights of Jeff Connor into the life of Dougal Haston, and the collection of

³³ Mike Parsons and Mary Rose, *Invisible on Everest: Innovation and the Gear Makers*, (Philadelphia: Northern Liberties Press, 2003), 7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 225, 228.

³⁵ Mike Parsons and Mary B. Rose, 'Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Competition in a Knowledge-Based Sector: The British Outdoor Trade, 1960-1990', European Business History Association Conference, (2001), 20.

³⁶ Jim Perrin, *The Villain: The Life of Don Whillans*, (London: Arrow Books Ltd, 2006); Joe Brown, *The Hard Years*, (London: Phoenix Books, 2007).

articles about Alan Rouse (1951 - 1986) offer a valuable glimpse into the sacrifices made in the climbing world from the 1960s.³⁷ Other mass-market texts have also made important contributions. Walt Unsworth's books, in particular *Everest*, give a thorough overview of expedition accounts and successes.³⁸ George Band's *Summit* also gives a useful, if sometimes one-sided, wider climbing context.³⁹ Economic factors linked to the themes of this thesis are only covered in passing in these materials, but pieced together and sat alongside other sources, their relevance to this study increases.

Although much has been written about Bonington in these accounts, his involvement has received relatively little academic attention. One exception is in Gilchrist's comparisons of his role as a hero with that of John Hunt (1910 – 1998), in which he established how much the character and expectation of an expedition leader changed within just a couple of decades, though "similarities" between them did remain.⁴⁰ Notable changes included the removal of hierarchical leadership under Hunt to a flatter, more inclusive and less amateur style of leadership under Bonington. This change in professional / amateur emphasis chimes with the broader work of Allison who found that, although the amateur ethos had been in "steady decline" across a longer period of time, it was particularly marked after 1945. He recognised that the years thereafter witnessed turning points across numerous sports as amateur hegemony ended and formerly gentlemanly control was removed.⁴¹

³⁷ Chris Bonington, *Boundless Horizons: The Autobiography of Chris Bonington*, (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1999); Jeff Connor, *Dougal Haston: The Philosophy of Risk*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd, 2002); Geoff Birtles, ed., *Alan Rouse: A Mountaineer's Life*, (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1988).

³⁸ Walt Unsworth, *Everest: The Mountaineering History*, (London: Bâton Wicks, 2000); Walt Unsworth, *Hold the Heights: The Foundations of Mountaineering*, (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1994).

³⁹ One-sided because it is a history of the Club rather than the full breadth of British climbing. George Band, *Summit: 150 Years of the Alpine Club*, (London: Collins, 2006).

⁴⁰ Paul Gilchrist, 'Heroic Leadership, Mountain Adventure and Englishness: John Hunt and Chris Bonington Compared' in *Heroines and Heroes: Symbolism, Embodiment, Narratives & Identity*, ed Chris Hart, (Kingswinford: Midrash Publications, 2008), 247-266.

⁴¹ Lincoln Allison, *Amateurism in Sport: An Analysis and a Defence*, (London: Routledge, 2001).

Bonington's prominence has also been recognised in Simon Thompson's *Unjustifiable Risk?*⁴² The part-academic and part-mainstream book explores the full extent of British climbing from before 1850 through to the modern day. It largely concentrates on social and cultural factors, though it includes some consideration of the commercialisation of the sport. In his discussion of how individuals have been able to forge a career from the sport, for instance, Thompson cited Bonington and Doug Scott as having "a virtual duopoly in the mountaineering arena in the 1970s and 80s".⁴³ He noted that others were able to generate an income too, though Thompson's study stops short of examining the reality of a climbing career in depth. Nor does he explore the entrepreneurial steps involving risk taking and technology, recognised by Ciletti, as significant traits that sportspeople could exploit.⁴⁴

There is a critical undertone throughout Thompson's book towards Scott and Bonington, though this helps to explain one of the other features of Thompson's work which can be considered a strength.⁴⁵ More than any other author in this field he makes clear the real reluctance of some climbers to new uses of the sport by subsequent generations. Whether this was Norman Collie's conservative attitude in the face of a new early twentieth-century generation of climbers, or the feelings of the establishment that younger climbers "treated them with a surely or sneering attitude, frequently accompanied by flagrant breaches of club rules", he raises awareness that this unwillingness to change has always been present in one form or another.⁴⁶ These pressures are especially striking when one considers the bounds forward that were nonetheless made in these post-war years. It is due to this angle that Thompson himself echoes many of the critiques of the wider mountaineering community towards climbers who were accused, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, of 'selling out'. These ethical voices were particularly pronounced in relation to the growing commercial activity in the sport though

⁴² Simon Thompson, *Unjustifiable Risk?: A Social History of British Climbing*, (Milnthorpe: Cicerone, 2010).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁴⁴ Dorene Ciletti, 'Sports Entrepreneurship: A Theoretical Approach' in Dorene Ciletti and Simon Chadwick, eds., *Sports Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, (Morgantown: Fitness Information Technology, 2012), 5.

⁴⁵ Such as two quotes in quick succession by fellow climbers denouncing Bonington's commercial aspects. *Ibid.*, 300.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 88; 202.

they risk being overstated, a factor considered in detail in this thesis because of its potential to act as a brake on expanding economic interests.

Amongst his contributions to post-war mountaineering literature, Peter Donnelly has recognised the uniqueness of mountaineering in how the absence of an effective governing body shaped the way it evolved. His analysis focussed on the implications of this for verification of mountain climbs where there were no “formalized or codified” requirements for how this was achieved.⁴⁷ In the more amateur pre-World War Two setting this was not problematic for “Trust in another’s claims was almost always taken for granted”. However, he noted that as the sport modernised, “trust became an issue”.⁴⁸ This governance void is significant for other reasons too, and this thesis builds on Donnelly’s initial analysis by assessing the absence of an influential body in the economic development of mountaineering. Polley has explained how it was often the governing bodies themselves that instigated change as amateur traditions were set aside and commercial opportunities permitted or encouraged.⁴⁹ In mountaineering though, the absence of a governing body performing these functions meant that the conditions were created for individuals to act entrepreneurially. Expanding our understanding about the implications of this unusual feature is important, for it was this which, ironically, freed up more entrepreneurial strides, and had a significant influence on how mountaineering modernised.

This could be regarded as a further sign of the growing individualisation of mountaineering. Peter Hansen, who has made important contributions to some of the more traditional aspects of

⁴⁷ Peter Donnelly, ‘On Verification: A Comparison of Climbers and Birders’, in *Career Patterns and Career Contingencies in Sport: Proceedings of 1st Regional Symposium, International Committee for the Sociology of Sport*, eds. Alan Ingham and Eric Broom, (Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 1981), 486.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 491.

⁴⁹ Martin Polley, “‘The Amateur Rules’: Amateurism and Professionalism in Post-War British Athletics’, in *Amateurs and Professionals in Post-War British Sport*, eds. Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 81-114.

mountaineering history,⁵⁰ recently examined how climbing development has been a reflection of modernity with greater tendencies towards individualism.⁵¹ In popular mainstream sports, Holt and Mason acknowledge that there was an increasing recognition that people could “promote themselves in new ways”, initially in more individualised rather than team sports.⁵² In *The Summits of Modern Man*, however, Hansen muses how “For many mountaineers and historians... the assertion of individual will is the essence of mountaineering and modern man”, an idea that can be carried into the post-war years.⁵³ The change that led to this was swift, for while individual opportunity took some time to embed in British society after the post-war consensus, it was quickly enacted in mountaineering. In the context of this study, recognising the movement towards individualism over national interests is critical in appreciating why mountaineering modernised as quickly as it did, and how financial considerations secured a foothold.

In a more mountaineering-specific study entitled *Playing with Gravity*, Peter Donnelly proposed a helpful generational theory which illustrated how mountaineering has developed relatively rapidly.⁵⁴ Using the 2002 International Year of Mountains as the purpose for re-examining the early progress in the sport, Donnelly’s revisionist study challenged the previously widely-regarded underpinnings of the supposed ‘Golden Age’ of mountaineering in the mid-nineteenth century.⁵⁵ He noted how the Golden Age was a “successful piece of self-serving propaganda” by the first generation of British mountaineers, not the essential period for the sport’s future that it had been constructed as

⁵⁰ Peter H. Hansen, ‘Tenzing’s Two Wrist-Watches: The Conquest of Everest and Late Imperial Culture in Britain 1921-1953: Debate’, *Past and Present* 157 (1997); Peter H. Hansen, ‘Confetti of Empire: The Conquest of Everest in Nepal, India, Britain, and New Zealand’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 2 (2000).

⁵¹ Peter Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2013), 10.

⁵² Richard Holt and Tony Mason, *Sport in Britain 1945-2000*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 111-113.

⁵³ Hansen, *Summits of Modern Man*, 3.

⁵⁴ Peter Donnelly, ‘Playing with Gravity: Mountains and Mountaineering’, in *Sites of Sport: Space, Place, Experience*, eds. Patricia Vertinsky and John Bale, (London: Routledge, 2004), 131-144.

⁵⁵ This is something that the author has previously considered. See Thomas Barcham, ‘British Mountaineering 1854 to 1865 – a Real Golden Era?’, (Master’s thesis, De Montfort University, 2008).

previously.⁵⁶ He went on to explain how every generation of new climbers “has had the capacity... to make changes in the form and meaning of mountaineering; this led to progressively more difficult ascents”.⁵⁷ By exceeding past standards and major achievements, each generation is effectively reinventing the sport. Although only applied by Donnelly to the early years of the sport, this idea of mountaineering reinventing itself is a useful perspective to bear in mind when one considers the changes that occurred when it became more commercialised and professionalised. Indeed, as this thesis will demonstrate, influential entrepreneurial activity and commercial thinking from the 1950s accelerated change.

These academics have tended to focus on a small number of climbers, essentially reflecting the size of the cohort at the cutting edge of the sport. These individuals are the main focus of this thesis too, and are referred to as ‘elite’ mountaineers – those who were dedicated to and invested in the sport by seeking to progress mountaineering through new genuinely challenging climbs and taking exciting and difficult approaches. Just as Puchan has found with other adventure sports, it was only a small number who sought to earn, who were the ones who took entrepreneurial steps, who identified business opportunities and developed commercial strategies, and it was therefore this group of individuals who ultimately transformed mountaineering rapidly in the post-war period.⁵⁸ Through the experiences of these mountaineers we can ascertain how a few key innovators, networkers and risk takers made a profound difference.

However, in a departure from this trend, a later type of climber emerged who sometimes had a more fleeting interest. Mountaineering demonstrated its nimbleness and adaptability most prominently through the creation of a new form of mountaineering that enabled a ‘client climber’ group to emerge.

⁵⁶ Donnelly, ‘Playing with Gravity’, 139.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 143

⁵⁸ Heike Puchan ‘Living “Extreme”: Adventure Sports, Media and Commercialisation’, *Journal of Communication Management* 9, no. 2 (2004), 171-178.

This has been of academic interest, particularly following Johnston and Edwards' recognition that "the selling of expertise" in this fashion was becoming a more common strategy for hopeful professional mountaineers.⁵⁹ Whilst the use of guides was popular in the nineteenth-century in the Alps, several sociologists have examined the new phenomenon in which clients pay to be led up the world's loftiest peaks by commercial outfits. Common arguments put forward by Palmer, Rosen, and Frohlick have demonstrated how these opportunities are sold to potential clients through glossy brochures and success rates, and that this has affected the mind-set of clients on such expeditions.⁶⁰

For both clients and elite climbers, the pursuit was like other adventure sports in representing "an opposition and alternative to traditional sports" which Breivik considered could be a sign of desire to take risk within a more individualised society, and thereby represents "some of the central traits of high modernity".⁶¹ Musa, Higham and Thompson-Carr have positioned this development within a wider mountaineering tourism movement in an edited collection that combines these clients with mountain porters, local communities and other parties, simultaneously examining "the social and environmental impacts of mountaineering tourism".⁶² Lewis is amongst those who have criticised these developments from a sporting values perspective – criticism that is often also found in contemporary journals and news accounts – asserting that such commercial expeditions were "completely at odds with the spirit of adventure, spontaneity, the effort of partnership, and the ethos of self-determination and risk assessment, epitomised by independent mountaineering".⁶³ For some climbers though, acting as a guide has enabled them to earn a living in the environment they desired,

⁵⁹ Johnston and Edwards, 'The Commodification of Mountaineering', 467.

⁶⁰ Catherine Palmer, "'Shit Happens': The Selling of Risk in Extreme Sport', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 3 (2002), 323-336; Elizabeth Rosen, 'Somalis Don't Climb Mountains: The Commercialization of Mount Everest', *The Journal of Popular Culture* 40, no. 1 (2007), 147-168; Susan Frohlick, 'Negotiating the "Global" Within the Global Playscapes of Mount Everest', *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 40, no. 5 (2003), 525-542.

⁶¹ Gunnar Breivik, 'Trends in Adventure Sports in a Post-Modern Society', *Sport in Society* 13, no. 2 (2010), 260, 269.

⁶² Ghazali Musa, James Higham and Anna Thompson-Carr, eds., *Mountaineering Tourism*, (London: Routledge, 2015), 1.

⁶³ Neil Lewis, 'The Climbing Body: Choreographing a History of Modernity', (PhD Thesis, Lancaster University, 2001), 260.

and Beedie is one such guide to have written academic research on the relationship they have with mountains, clients and the desirability of guiding as a career.⁶⁴

However, the distortions that this group introduced to mountaineering's prior economic norms have yet to fall under the gaze of mountaineering historians, despite them being – as this thesis shows – considerable. Indeed, despite the numerous works cited above, the existing literature has only really hinted at the role of economic factors in any aspect of mountaineering during the post-war period. Where it has, it has tended relate to a specific event or climber, rather than the impact on the sport as a whole. On the occasions where academics have given attention to this theme, the findings suggest money-matters played a pivotal role in modernising climbing, making the current gap in our awareness over a longer time, and of the realities that made this happen, unsustainable.

As a result of analysing a longer chronology, extending the research and examination of several of the factors first explored by other authors, and tying this into a broader narrative about the economic transformation in mountaineering, this thesis provides a more holistic analysis. In doing so, it shows how Donnelly's findings can be updated for the post-war era during which, given the pace of transformation, there were significant reinventions *within* generations rather than *between* generations. Whereas Donnelly's theory suggests that each generation of climbers reinvented itself to surpass the achievements of their predecessors, this thesis will demonstrate that it was the aspirations and activities of a small group of high performing mountaineers who further sped up the modernisation of mountaineering. This moved it from an activity that was insular and traditional into one that was progressive and overt over the course of three distinct phases, or re-inventions, within the space of less than fifty years.

⁶⁴ Paul Beedie, 'Mountain Guiding and Adventure Tourism: Reflections on the Choreography of the Experience', *Leisure Studies* 22, no. 2 (2003), 147-167; Paul Beedie and Simon Hudson, 'Emergence of Mountain-Based Adventure Tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research* 30, no. 3 (2003), 625-643.

In the process, many of the core imperatives that were once at the heart of mountaineering were cast aside. This new examination of elite mountaineering therefore helps us to understand not only the role of the entrepreneur but also how they were able to make a difference and earn a living; not only the commodification of the sport but also how commercial interest changed over time; and not only the way that the sport adapted to these adjustments but also how the consequences have profoundly and permanently changed the sport, marketplace and opportunities it offered. The connected, yet distinct nature of the thesis' four themes – replacement of an amateur mind-set with a more professional one, entrepreneurialism, media, and commercialisation – are explored to fill these information gaps and to help us to understand how this activity became more modern whilst still retaining some of its unique characteristics.

Definitions, Methodology and Structure

Distinguishing the meanings of certain key phrases is important for readers of this thesis, especially where these terms sometimes lack a definitive definition. Whilst some climbers identified with the concept of, in Potter's words, 'mountain communicators', many have been reluctant to refer to themselves as 'professionals'. Even one of the world's best-known climbers, the Italian Reinhold Messner, has only been prepared to describe himself as a "freelance alpinist" rather than "professional mountaineer".⁶⁵ Clearly the term holds a different meaning compared with professional footballers or golfers. Throughout this thesis however, the term 'professional' is used in relation to the earning opportunities – whether regular or irregular, considerable, incidental, or as part of a career – of mountaineers as they moved beyond the boundaries of amateurism by establishing an overt relationship between the sport and money.

⁶⁵ Reinhold Messner, 'Ideas: The Risk Market. Reflections on Fame and the Boom in Professional Mountaineering', *Mountain* 92 (1983), 44.

Not all climbers sought this association however, and a number pursued mountaineering at the highest levels without searching for monetary reward. Because of this, these climbers do not feature prominently in this work, though their contributions were of real significance for the sport. As this thesis focusses on a small cohort of professionally-minded climbers, the term 'elite' is used solely in reference to them. This term could be used in different ways including as a general term for all of those who were at the forefront of the sport. However, here it is used specifically for those who climbed at the highest standard and pursued earning opportunity. This term is necessary because it helps to distinguish from the guided client climbers who feature extensively in Chapter 4. These guided climbers could not be regarded as performing at the highest standard though they are still of significance to this study. The climbers of the highest standard who are part of the small number of individuals significant for this study are 'elite' by comparison.

The lack of governance or codification in mountaineering has been alluded to, and one consequence of this was a sport that exhibited much variety. Without rules about how climbing should be practised, individuals pursued and used the sport in ways that they chose and this led to a number of variations. In 1968 Lito Tedja-Flores offered a categorisation of climbing activities that recognised that "climbing is not a homogenous sport but rather a collection of differing (though related) activities".⁶⁶ Ranking these activities in terms of the "complexity (or number) of their rules" Tedja-Flores found seven deviations which were, in order of complexity, bouldering, crag climbing, continuous rock-climbing, big-wall climbing, alpine climbing, super alpine climbing and expedition climbing.⁶⁷ For the purposes of this research, the focus is largely on the final variant. Expedition climbing – often referred to in this thesis under the more concise term 'mountaineering' – had both the fewest rules but also, arguably, the greatest public interest and business opportunities for elite climbers thanks to the high profile

⁶⁶ Lito Tedja-Flores, 'Games Climbers Play', *Alpine Journal* 73 (1968), 46.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 47-49.

stages on which it was set. 'Mountaineering' is therefore at the centre of this thesis although variants, including alpine climbing, are discussed.⁶⁸

Discussions of ethics also feature regularly in this research. Although ethics could be considered another name for amateur values, here they go beyond the points of contention referred to under amateurism because they evolved as climbing changed. In the years up to 1970, the changes experienced related more specifically to a breakdown of amateur ideals as the influence of both class and established bodies adjusted. Later though, the nuances of how a mountain was climbed, the use of transportation and the quest for publicity all adjusted and sit more appropriately under the term 'ethics'.

In the context of this research, the term 'ethics' is therefore used in relation to what was expected, often as a result of traditions within the community, by climbers. New practices emerged as the sport changed, and these were sometimes seen as a threat by other members of the community. As rock climber Jerry Moffat has explained, "Ethics are the unwritten rules for climbing. They are really more about style, what you can get away with and what you can't".⁶⁹ The debates that emerged are referred to throughout this thesis as debates about 'ethics'.

The aforementioned historians have applied differing methodologies to their research, ranging from oral history, to analysis of existing secondary literature, through to use of contemporary popular literature. The focal point of this thesis is in understanding the detail of the arrangements that led to this type of commercial involvement, and it is from archival sources that this level of understanding is best acquired. Such sources make it possible to examine how individuals negotiated with wider commercial forces and the nature of those connections. Archival research has formed the bulk of the

⁶⁸ Alpine-style climbing being an approach where climbers carried equipment, provisions and shelter when attempting a route in a single effort, potentially over several days. By contrast, in siege-style climbing numerous teams of climbers attempt to make steady progress up a mountain over a longer periods, creating several camps on the route which are provisioned, and then serve as a launchpad for the next phase of the climb.

⁶⁹ Jerry Moffatt, *Revelations*, (Sheffield: Vertebrate Publishing, 2010), Kindle edition, location 587.

material used, whilst collections of various mountaineering magazines and journals have been valuable.

The resources held at the Mountain Heritage Trust (MHT) archives in Cumbria were pivotal in establishing the potential for this as a research subject. Collections at the MHT contain personal materials from various climbers, including a remarkable level of documentary detail. Amongst these are decades-old audio recordings of interviews with individuals such as Doug Scott. The MHT's release of the Chris Bonington archive in 2011 made a valuable collection available. The materials held in this comprehensive collection include personal correspondence, extensive papers concerning expedition organisation and leadership, and press-related materials, providing a wealth of information relevant to this research topic. The Bonington collection is one of many that are based around climbers from the second half of the twentieth-century (others include climber Joe Tasker and journalist Alan Hankinson), while further items at MHT pre-date this.

The collections at the MHT do not stand alone in enabling a thorough insight into elite mountaineers and commercial connections. The Alpine Club archive, located in central London, holds other interesting collections including some dating from the later twentieth-century. The Don Whillans collection was especially important, and it contains documents of real detail, not least a signed 1962 contract between Whillans, Bonington and the *Daily Express*, an early example of the maturing relationship between climbers and business.⁷⁰ The extensive library of periodicals that are hard to obtain elsewhere, and collections of past 'circulars' and other club-specific materials ensured that the Alpine Club archives were vital for this study.

Perhaps less obvious, but highly useful archives were those of the Barclays Group. The materials – including meeting minutes, proposals and press materials – held near Manchester gave a rich and

⁷⁰ Contract between the *Daily Express* and Don Whillans and Chris Bonington dated July 9, 1962, Alpine Club, Don Whillans Box 14 P48, "Files".

detailed understanding of the corporate motivations and practicalities for sponsoring a mountaineering expedition, specifically the successful expedition to Everest in 1975. Alongside this, a small number of in-house publicity materials demonstrated how the decision to back the climb was communicated to staff.

Visits to other archives were also important. Materials held at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh included specific expedition promotional materials, for instance in relation to the 1981 British Mount Kongur Expedition. The most revealing collection was that for Thomas Graham Brown, editor of the Alpine Club's *Alpine Journal* in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The *Alpine Journal* itself proved an important resource – with a partial collection available at Birmingham Library – whilst the personal reflections and handwritten notes of Graham Brown neatly illustrated much of the more 'traditional' elements of the climbing community that eventually moved aside as the century wore on.

Expedition reports were also a staple document for this research, and sourced from various locations. The British Mountaineering Council's expedition report archive was very useful covering a wide range of expeditions – the majority of which were not pursued with commercial connections or professional intentions – including revealing income and expenditure accounts. The Royal Geographical Society in London, and the Al Rouse Library in Sheffield also house a number of these reports.

Added to these archival materials are a wealth of published expedition and mountaineering accounts, popular literature,⁷¹ and biographies and autobiographies including those mentioned above.⁷²

⁷¹ For example, see Fergus Fleming, *Killing Dragons: The Conquest of the Alps*, (London: Granta Publications, 2000); Trevor Braham, *When The Alps Cast their Shadow: Mountaineers of the Alpine Golden Age*, (Glasgow: The Inn Pinn, 2004); Jim Ring, *How the English Made the Alps*, (London: John Murray, 2001).

⁷² In addition to those already mentioned, see also David Rose and Ed Douglas, *Regions of the Heart*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2000); Simon Yates, *The Flame of Adventure*, (London: Vintage, 2000); Tom Patey, *One Man's Mountain's*, (Edinburgh, Canongate Books Ltd, 1997).

Newspaper articles and collections of such materials have also been pivotal.⁷³ These proved to be important materials for this research. Whilst the quality of biography and autobiography as a source has been queried, given the potential for personal biases and an overly individualised view of the past, their use in the context of this thesis is paramount.⁷⁴ As a study that relies on the details of specific climbs and expeditions, biographical material allows understanding of the motivations, aspirations, emotions and decision making that more formal archival material may not. Moreover, texts such as *Regions of the Heart* and *Philosophy of Risk* are biographical accounts of individuals no longer alive, but which rely on detailed examination of personal materials or individual knowledge and shared experiences with those in question. Here they are not used in isolation, but in conjunction with archival materials. Dismissing these sources for fear of their potentially skewed perspectives would be to “ignore the information at a loss” for this type of information gives an “unparalleled source of clues about sensibilities...as well as of the values and interpretations” of those involved.⁷⁵

However, archives are far from the perfect source themselves. As Booth has argued, archives do not necessarily reflect the true position of the history of a sport at a point in the past, but they are subject to considerable pressures of their own, perhaps affecting their subjectivity and introducing potential bias.⁷⁶ The Alpine Club’s archives have probably been most widely used in this field. However, one needs to remember that the Alpine Club was not representative of the mountaineering community throughout its past and may therefore fail to include materials on some of the more important issues and climbers of their day. Moreover, the club’s own materials (journals, committee minutes) may well disregard people who were not members, and as a result exclude some of the most prominent people and changes that occurred. This selectivity over the materials which make up the archives (i.e.

⁷³ Peter Gillman, *In Balance: Twenty Years of Mountaineering Journalism*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989); Richard Nelsson, ed., *On the Roof of the World: The Guardian Book of Mountains*, (London: Guardian Books, 2012), Kindle edition.

⁷⁴ Jeremy D. Popkin, *History, Historians, and Autobiography*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 20 citing Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), viii.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 20, citing Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), viii.

⁷⁶ Douglas Booth, ‘Sites of Truth or Metaphors of Power? Refiguring the Archive’, *Sport in History* 26 (2006), 93-5.

choosing what was and was not preserved) can have an influence on how the sport is regarded. Here, the chronology of this research becomes a major advantage. Whilst one may consider the Alpine Club archives as potentially reflecting the 'traditional' mountaineer, climbing magazines did not hold the same potential bias. Becoming most prominent from the late 1960s, magazines such as *Crags* and *Mountain* help to provide a genuine alternative perspective from the longer established institutions. Sat alongside biographical accounts a diverse range of information has been used. Indeed, the different materials and archives used in this research make it possible to form a rounded view of the topic based on multiple perspectives.

Visual evidence from several of these sources is used in this thesis. Newspaper articles, adverts and magazine cartoons have been used to reinforce key points and to illustrate how mountaineering was being communicated. These are especially important in areas of publicity for guided climbs and expeditions, where the centrality of certain individuals (specifically Dougal Haston) is important, later evolving into adverts documenting a range of climbs being offered by expedition companies. Despite mountaineering being a visually impactful sport, the visual evidence included here is specifically selected to convey findings of significance.

Oral histories could have been one way of extending the source materials used for this research. Potter put this methodology to good use in his study, with Skillen and Osborne explaining how the voices of those involved have proven beneficial in other histories, both sporting and not.⁷⁷ However, the wealth of available written materials offered a deeper understanding of the detail so important for this research. On balance, oral histories would have added only to the general narrative of this research, rather than the detailed examples and piecing together of expeditions that are at its core. Since this is ultimately a study about a small number of individuals and their ability to earn an income or make a career from mountaineering, it would not have been possible to select only one or two interview

⁷⁷ Fiona Skillen and Carol Osborne, 'It's Good to Talk: Oral History, Sports History and Heritage', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 15 (2015), 1883 – 1898.

candidates. An interview with one relevant person would necessitate interviews with all others still alive to avoid falling foul of being, in Tosh's words, the "the historian who selects the informant and indicates the area of interest".⁷⁸

The methodology adopted for this study is therefore the most suitable to use for research of this nature. Considering the 1975 Everest expedition, other authors including Potter only refer to the coverage this expedition gets from Bonington's own books and briefly in interview. They do not consider the archival materials which relate to this expedition available at the Barclays Group archive or the Alan Tritton (Barclay's chairman) collection at the MHT. The authors own 2013 *Sport in History* paper used these materials to focus instead on the substantial corporate sponsorship of this expedition, piecing together a detailed and thorough understanding of the increasingly close connection between commercial parties and mountaineering, and the opportunities available from such relationships.⁷⁹ This approach made it possible to identify the reasons why such sponsorship was attractive, the practicalities of making the arrangements and the benefits that were derived for both sponsor and climbers. It is gaps such as this that this fuller thesis aims to fill, building up an appreciation of the economic influences, applied to different eras and climbers, whilst retaining the approach of delving into the detail to establish a history from, in Hardy's terms, the "inside out".⁸⁰

This thesis is structured around the aforementioned key periods, separated by defining moments – from the first ascent of Everest to the eve of new grand Himalayan expeditions (1953 to 1969), to the advent of guided climbing (1970 to 1985), to the end of the century (1985 to 2000). It is notable that the three periods had quite different characteristics and the chapter structures differ to accommodate this. Each of the three core chapters is based on a series of case-studies. In the 1953 to 1969 chapter,

⁷⁸ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods, and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, (London: Longman, 1991), 213.

⁷⁹ Thomas Barcham, 'Commercial Sponsorship in Mountaineering: A Case Study of the 1975 British Everest Expedition', *Sport in History* 33, no. 3 (2013), 333-352.

⁸⁰ Hardy, 'Entrepreneurs, Organizations, and the Sport Marketplace', 16.

the case-studies revolve primarily around individual climbers since they were each forging their own quite different trails, often with smaller scale climbs. Based on these it is shown how amateur norms were set aside relatively swiftly and these climbers were the first to capitalise. Their reliance on the media is underscored, though their own understanding of the need to gain and sustain publicity was critical, particularly as they wrote, lectured and endorsed various climbing-related goods. In doing so they laid the foundations for the greater commercial reliance and professional-thinking of the years ahead.

The case-studies in the 1969 to 1985 chapter are based around specific expeditions. Large-scale expeditions, which often involved many of the same elite climbers, defined these years and are the ideal angle with which to examine how and why new sponsors and other commercial interests began partnering with climbers. Mountaineering gained greater traction and prominence and the most entrepreneurial climbers could truly regard it as their career. A section of the chapter also weighs up the effectiveness of a growing movement that defended mountaineering ethics. Concerned by the exacerbated pressures on mountaineering, its new appeal to mainstream interests, and how some climbers sought to take advantage of them, vocal critics were heard loudly through the emerging specialist press. By drawing attention to some new practices their arguments gained momentum. As will be shown though, they were relatively ineffective at halting the reshaping of mountaineering by economic matters.

In the 1985 to 2000 chapter, the case-studies revert back mainly to individuals. This is largely because the greater individualism in the sport led to professional-minded mountaineers tending to no longer be part of the same climbs, but to make themselves stand out from the increasingly competitive crowd. By this time, the newer client climber found fame and fortune, and they led the sport to make another significant change which opened up the world's most mountainous terrain to paying customers. In tandem was a growing use of novelty even amongst respected climbers as they attempted various entrepreneurial ploys to maintain publicity. These factors moved mountaineering

much further from its pre-war sub-cultural norms, and even those of the 1960s and 1970s. This chapter considers some of the changes occurring at the very end of the century which illustrate just how much the sport had adjusted. A concluding chapter revisits the four key themes of this thesis – declining amateur influence, entrepreneurialism, media, and commercialisation. It demonstrates how much each of these had changed between 1953 and 2000 whilst recognising that the modernisation that was witnessed was only made possible by the steps that had occurred in each of these three eras.

Chapter 2. 1953 to 1969 - Breaking a New Trail: The Early Search for Earnings in a Fast Changing Pursuit

From the creation of mountaineering as a sport in the 1850s, individuals who climbed abroad were almost exclusively those who could afford to leisure for large parts of the year, supporting their adventures from their own wealth. Membership of the Alpine Club, which reflected the typical climber of the nineteenth century and was recognised internationally as the most prominent and successful club, was almost exclusively upper-middle class.¹ Members sought adventure on mountain peaks for escapism, as part of muscular Christianity, and to connect with the outdoors. They were quintessential Victorian amateurs and as such earning potential was not a concern for them. Over subsequent decades British climbing diminished in prominence from these heady 'Golden Age' days, yet it experienced a resurgence in the aftermath of World War Two. This culminated in a renewed presence on the world stage at a time when the nation was still coming to terms with its diminished global role. British authority over the mountaineering world was reasserted with success on the summit of Mount Everest in May 1953, which became a pivotal moment for the country as well as the sport.

The expedition members on that successful Everest climb were part of a system that was still underpinned by amateur attitudes. The governance groups that organised climbs in the Himalayas and other greater ranges, the style of these climbs, and the process to select climbers were dominated by traditional perspectives dating back to the nineteenth century, with a small number of 'gentlemen' at their heart. As such, the Everest ascent marked the highpoint for amateur attitudes as a controlling force in the sport. The climb was monumental enough to not only place Britain back on the international map, but to fundamentally affect the way that mountaineering was practised. Almost immediately afterwards though, the sport was reshaped, quickly losing its amateur identity and being increasingly driven by each of the four forces identified as central to this thesis – entrepreneurialism,

¹ See Peter Hansen's analysis of Alpine Club Membership commencing in the 1850s. Peter Hansen, 'British Mountaineering, 1850 – 1914', (PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 1991), 464-470.

increasing professional attitudes at the expense of amateur perspectives, commercial steps and use of the media – which had previously been of little consequence. These forces combined through a small number of key agents to transform the future of mountaineering.

Success on Everest made Edmund Hillary (1919 - 2008), Tenzing Norgay (1914 - 1986), John Hunt and other expedition members famous worldwide. While they may not have expected this, it demonstrated that mountaineering could sustain publicity and fame, and with them, new opportunities. From this moment onwards, more modern perspectives replaced old ideals and a gradual openness to entrepreneurial attitudes resulted which grew in prominence in the 1960s. The elite climbers emerging in this changing landscape were not driven only by the growing prominence of fame and fortune, but also appreciated how both commercial interests and the changing media could be connected to it. This encouraged a range of new partners and other commercial interests to look again at how they might be able to commodify the mountain environment in this era of adjusting sporting pressures.

Building on an initial assessment of British social and economic life which is enhanced as the chapter progresses, the coming pages examine how mountaineering change arose and how far it reached. By exploring the role of groups such as the Alpine Club up to and following the first ascent of Everest we can understand how amateur ideals were eroded. The ascent of Everest itself is then considered in this context, followed by a series of four case-studies of the most prominent new breed of climbers in these years. Each case study reveals something different about the reshaping of elite British mountaineering as well as analysing what this meant for the individuals involved.

The strong forces that struck mountaineering came during a time of uncertainty for Britain more generally. Although historians such as Broadberry and Crafts have argued that Britain remained a key player on the world stage and performed relatively well economically once the emerging superpowers

were taken out of the equation, it is impossible to ignore the impacts that were being felt at the time.² Hit by crises, foreign policy miss-steps and a shrinking Empire, Britain moved from a “world-imperial power to... middle-ranking state”.³ Pessimism was widespread with the perception of declinism reinforced by popular texts from the likes of Shanks and Shonfield, while Morgan has likewise highlighted how such sentiments had “profound effects on British society and politics”.⁴

Despite the gloom at a macro level, individual improvements led to rising personal affluence, consumer activity and improving social mobility in part facilitated by improvements in education – most pronounced during the 1960s.⁵ These were the changes that had the greatest impact on people’s day to day lives and outlook, irrespective of Britain’s international role. The 1960s, and years either side, saw removal of various norms which aided expansion in personal opportunity and domestic life. Historians such as Marwick have explained how “Release came, not just from post-war austerity, but from social controls going back to Victorian times”, going on to later explain that there were “challenges to established society in terms of freedom and tolerance”.⁶ Social progress was certainly being made with Marwick summarising how society was becoming “more classless in some respects”.⁷

² N. F. R. Crafts, ‘The Golden Age of Economic Growth in Western Europe, 1950-1973’, *Economic History Review* 48, no. 3, (1995), 429-447; Stephen Broadberry and Nicholas Crafts, ‘UK Productivity Performance from 1950 to 1979: A Restatement of the Broadberry-Crafts View’, *Economic History Review* 56, no. 4 (2003), 733.

³ Brian Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom 1951-1970*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 532. In his valedictory despatch, high ranking diplomat Sir Nicholas Henderson was critical of Britain’s position explaining that there was a failure to understand both the evolution of the Commonwealth and the “new footing” for European relations, leaving Britain in a weaker role. Sir Nicholas Henderson, ‘Valedictory Despatch’, *The Economist*, March 31, 1979, online <http://www.economist.com/node/13315108> (accessed August 10, 2016).

⁴ Kenneth O. Morgan, *The People’s Peace: British History 1945-1989*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 201; Jim Tomlinson, ‘Economic “Decline” in Post-War Britain’, in Paul Addison and Harriet Jones, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 165; Jim Tomlinson, ‘The Decline of the Empire and the Economic “Decline” of Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History* 14, no. 3 (2003), 202.

⁵ Michael Sanderson, ‘Education and Social Mobility’, in Paul Johnson, ed., *20th Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change*, (London: Longman, 1994), 382-384.

⁶ Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, (London: Penguin, 1996), 12, 125.

⁷ Ibid. 154.

People from different classes could look forwards to new opportunities and modernity as social changes offered a new way of life. This view of the era is not universally held, however. Sandbrook has argued that since the watershed 1956 Suez crisis, British society was more complex and “contradictory” than other historians suggest. Rather than change dominating these years, Sandbrook perceives conservatism and continuity with older traditions, in particular for those who were *not* of the middle classes.⁸

Linking back to the global picture, Sandbrook has gone on to explain that “sporting achievement was widely treated as a barometer of the nation’s health and international standing” and therefore, “for many observers, Britain’s sporting mediocrity was just one aspect of a general decline”.⁹ There were though some sporting highlights which carried considerable weight in this pessimistic time. The four-minute mile, the ascent of Everest and, later, World Cup success were important opportunities to foster patriotic feelings both at the time and through the legacy they left. Similarly, the Queen’s Coronation reasserted much pride and made a connection back to the pre-war years. Although the way in which these moments have been portrayed has been challenged (as we shall see below), their significance to Britain was magnified given the social malaise of the period.

Following nineteenth-century climbing successes in the Alps, reaching high summits had long been upheld as a source of British imperial and national pride. This swelled considerably with the ascent of Everest and remained so from a public and press perspective for decades afterwards. While there were numerous other mountaineering achievements in the 1950s and 1960s, the connection between mountaineering and ‘Britishness’ was ingrained after 1953. Because of its national importance, mountaineering success can be regarded as something of an ‘invented tradition’ based on Eric Hobsbawm’s definition. This is particularly so given that repeated prominent climbs on the world’s

⁸ Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good*, (London: Abacus, 2005), xvi.

⁹ Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, (London: Abacus, 2007), 306.

highest mountains lent the feeling of a “continuity with the past”.¹⁰ As such, climbers could continue to be seen to represent the nation on a global landscape and their success would often be celebrated at home.

Indeed, the Everest climb was not a one-off triumph. Successes on Everest in 1953, followed by ascents in this era of Kanchenjunga (1955), the third highest summit in the world, the iconic 1,800m Eiger North face (1962) and on the Old Man of Hoy sea stack in the Orkney’s (1966) helped Britain’s international standing and self-perception. Mountaineering was to renew British prestige and remind the world of her past and emerging role, and this may have contributed to Harold Macmillan’s use of language in a 1957 speech that invoked adventure and courage and what this meant for British national identity. He urged the nation to look forwards with optimism and said that Britain “can only live if opportunity is given to the bold, the strong, the adventurous, to make their way in the world and are not ashamed of it”.¹¹ This helps explain why mountaineering came to serve such a prominent role throughout the years that followed, confirming that it was a relevant pursuit with meaning for the country as well as the participants.

Despite this, the sense that major climbing achievements were good for the nation was a less important motivation for climbers themselves. Following success on Everest it was marketability and potential personal benefits that became important for some. In keeping with the wider social shifts, the new group of individuals recognised that it was their own brand rather than that of the country that could be enhanced by adventurous tales. Despite national challenges, the freedoms, meritocracy and perceived opportunity that arose helped new climbers to recognise that they too might be able

¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

¹¹ ‘Macmillan and the Opportunity State’, The National Archives, online <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/fifties-britain/macmillan-opportunity-state/> (accessed December 5, 2016).

to reach the fame and heroic status of Hillary. It was the changing social context, rather than the 1953 sporting moment, that truly reshaped mountaineering up to 1969.

While mountaineering may be but a microcosm of British society, the transformative effect of this era is unquestionable and it is significant that this extended *beyond* the middle classes. A handful of climbers who could not previously have been members of the Alpine Club made genuinely transformative steps, fundamentally changing what it meant to be an elite climber. Their involvement may still have been regarded as a peculiarity – not yet part of an overarching new mountaineering norm – but their effect was indisputable and it did transform their lives.

Instead of the 'leisured' traveller of prior decades, by the 1960s there were working and middle-class climbers who cooperated and sought serious climbing success, often without the extravagance that followed the earlier military-led expeditions. Prior mountaineering norms were being openly challenged and the small number of high profile climbers took more novel approaches to funding climbs in part by marketing their successes and increasingly pushing it into the mainstream. Their efforts to bring the media and new commercial interests into the equation helped some of these individuals begin to emerge as genuine 'career climbers'.

Climbing ability was critical for this, and for those with the necessary attributes mountaineering began to reflect the adjustments being experienced in Britain as a "more fluid, skilled and competitive society, in which more people were in a position to do anything they chose".¹² Mountaineering, like other sports and other aspects of modern life, was becoming more meritocratic. Polley has reflected how these adjustments were often "sites of struggle" as adaptations were made, but it was clear that changes led to "redefinition [which] allowed talented individuals" to benefit from their skills by earning.¹³ Although this adjustment was not completed by 1969, the changes in how mountaineering

¹² George L. Bernstein, *The Myth of Decline: The Rise of Britain since 1945*, (London: Pimlico, 2004), 275.

¹³ Martin Polley, "'The Amateur Rules': Amateurism and Professionalism in Post-War British Athletics', in Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, eds., *Amateurs and Professionals in Post-War British Sport*, (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 83.

was practised and overseen demonstrated to its community, sub-culture and society more widely that it was no longer reliant on the traditional footings that had dominated for so long.

Such change was not unique to mountaineering; more popular sports including cricket, football and golf had similar experiences in tolerating more modern practices after World War Two.¹⁴ Professionalisation was increasingly acceptable and became more widespread, while commercialisation through sponsorship, endorsements and paying spectators were significantly greater influences.¹⁵ Even prestigious traditional events such as the Commonwealth Games were becoming more commercially focussed in the 1950s.¹⁶ Some sports began to adopt economic adjustments in keeping with Hardy's tripartite approach, often including increased prominence of sporting goods being sold into bigger markets.¹⁷ For much of British sport the changes were substantial enough that they, like other aspects of British life, found that the 1950s and 1960s "destroyed a cultural continuity that had lasted from the Victorian period".¹⁸ In mountaineering, the 1960s ended with the sport not only better known amongst the wider public, but also sustaining for the first time the financial interests of individuals and companies alike.

The number of elite British mountaineers has always been small, though their individual impact has been considerable. The experiences of the four key climbers examined in this chapter – Joe Brown, Don Whillans, Chris Bonington and Dougal Haston – all differed, but in combination we can appreciate

¹⁴ Porter has explained how many of the old Victorian governing bodies and institutions were modernised from the early 1960s, starting with cricket's abandonment of participant distinctions which saw the MCC "lead the way in embracing reform". Dilwyn Porter, 'More than a Game: Sport, Business and the Media in Britain since 1960', in Christiane Eisenberg and Andreas Gestrich, eds., *Cultural Industries in Britain and Germany: Sport, Music and Entertainment from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century*, (Augsburg: Wissner, 2012), 125-6.

¹⁵ Martin Polley, *Moving the Goalposts: A History of Sport and Society in Britain since 1945*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 63-84; 114-127.

¹⁶ Michael Dawson, 'Acting Global, Thinking Local: "Liquid Imperialism" and the Multiple Meanings of the 1954 British Empire and Commonwealth Games', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 23, no. 1 (2006), 3-27.

¹⁷ Stephen Hardy, 'Entrepreneurs, Organizations, and the Sport Marketplace: Subjects in Search of Historians', *Journal of Sport History* 13, no. 1 (1986): 14-33.

¹⁸ Jeremy Black, *Britain since the Seventies: Politics and Society in the Consumer Age*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 55.

how their entrepreneurial attributes were significant, how they used the media differently, and the new perspectives they brought to a previously traditional activity. By the end of the 1960s, climbing was very different to the sport that placed the first men on Everest's summit, yet it was benefitting from that moment. The governing bodies had transformed, new modern faces gained a high media profile by capitalising on publicity, and commercial arrangements were becoming acceptable and bearing fruit for both corporations and climbers. There was subtle continuity too. For instance, although governing arrangements did change, the traditional organisations were not completely ousted. The shift was not drastic enough to completely overhaul existing arrangements – they were reformed instead – and this ensured that some traditional perspectives remained. Nonetheless, the period up to 1969 prepared the sport for the more substantial developments that would come later. For many of the individuals involved these years would be the first taste of what career climbing offered, and it commenced when the highest point in the world was reached. However, to appreciate the journey that these climbers took it is necessary to understand how they fitted in with the prevailing mountaineering social norms in the early 1950s.

Declining Role of Traditionalists

In the immediate post-war period British mountaineering was making slow progress. As one commentator explained after World War Two:

In the coming post-war years English mountaineering must find a new stimulus, a regenerated spirit which will bring it on a par technically with its Continental contemporaries. We must make new history instead of indulging in reminiscences of the old. Even allowing for the war, the pages of recent Alpine journals are full of historical study, early memories and descriptions

of well-known classical routes. We must aim at a much higher standard of technical achievement.¹⁹

George Band too observed that even in the Alps the “outstanding feature of immediate post-war climbing... was the increasing numbers of continental climbers taking part, accompanied by a general rise in their competence”, and it was not until the 1950s that British climbers made their presence felt.²⁰ The first real attempts to rebuild British mountaineering’s reputation were the reconnaissance and attempts on Everest of the early 1950s which led ultimately to the mountain’s first ascent in 1953. During these early expeditions, interspersed with efforts on the mountain by teams from Switzerland, decisions were being made by the same established governing bodies who featured heavily in the pre-war period.

Up to 1953 elite British mountaineering had been dominated – almost controlled – by three bodies. These were the Alpine Club to which almost all recognised climbers belonged, the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), which was an important funder and decision maker for large expeditions, and the Mount Everest Committee (MEC), which comprised members of the two former groups and took responsibility for arranging and financing major expeditions. The Alpine Club, established in 1857, wielded considerable power in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often exercised through indirect social controls to limit the types of person, by class, who could become a member.²¹ It was regarded as exclusive and powerful, the mountaineering authority to which other clubs in the UK and abroad looked up to. The MEC created its own power by being the decision making group for expeditions to Everest and other Himalayan peaks, and, importantly, decided who would be invited

¹⁹ Dulcibel Jenkins, ed., *Chronicles of John R. Jenkins, 1913 – 1947: Mountaineer, Miner and Quaker*, (Wittering, Castle Printers, 1987), 135.

²⁰ George Band, *Summit: 150 Years of the Alpine Club*, (London: Collins, 2006), 97; 105-106.

²¹ Hansen, ‘British Mountaineering’, 14.

to climb.²² As an “avowedly nationalistic body” it held prestige and proper appearance in high regard.²³ As Conefrey has pointedly explained in his popular Everest history book, the MEC’s “very existence was predicated on the idea of big, ‘national’ expeditions; working parties, subcommittees, reports, memos, press releases, minutes – this was its version of Everest climbing”.²⁴ In keeping with this Rak has explained, with perhaps dubious date parameters, that “climbing, particularly before the 1970s, was a key way for modern men—and especially middleclass [sic] and upper-class white men associated with imperial and colonial regimes—to imagine themselves as men who are socially productive *because* they are engaged in what is essentially an unproductive activity,”²⁵ and this was for many the justification for their role and the way they could make their passion ‘productive’.

The control by these groups, and their often-traditional perspectives, meant that mountaineering continued to be undertaken in the same sort of style and with the same values as it had been in the 1920s and earlier. However, as part of the declinist attitudes of the era there were growing challenges to such arrangements and anti-establishment feelings ran strongly.²⁶ With such attitudes towards the traditional elements of British society, the regard with which the old established groups – and deferential viewpoints in general – were held diminished, challenged successfully by a more progressive outlook. More generally, this led to a less deferential culture where people could become more skilled, more highly trained, and find genuine opportunity for social mobility and other forms of

²² Carol Osborne, ‘Gender and the Organisation of British Climbing c.1857-1955’, (PhD Thesis, University of Lancaster, 2004), 425.

²³ David Fickling, ‘We Knocked the Bastard Off’, originally published in *The Guardian* March 13, 2003, reprinted in Richard Nelsson, ed., *On the Roof of the World: The Guardian Book of Mountains*, (London: Guardian Books, 2012), Kindle edition, location 2045.

²⁴ Mick Conefrey, *Everest 1953: The Epic Story of the First Ascent*, (London: Oneworld, 2013), 33.

²⁵ Julie Rak, ‘Social Climbing on Annapurna: Gender in High-altitude Mountaineering Narratives’, *English Studies in Canada* 33, no. 1 (2008), 112.

²⁶ Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, 367.

success regardless of individual background. In the case of mountaineering, it led to notable changes to the established organisations, and their influence over the sport.

Just as other social establishments were coming under pressure and “old symbols were not revered as much as in the past”²⁷, these mountaineering bodies found their significance diminished. Early signs of this came in the form of considering ‘unofficial’ attempts on Everest that were outside the MEC’s control. One such planned expedition was organised by Hamish MacInnes and John Cunningham in the same year that Everest was climbed, a development noted by both Unsworth and Osborne as evidence that newer post-war climbers cared little for the prior norms and traditional approaches.²⁸

The world of elite climbing in Britain was widening and becoming more diverse, posing challenges for the authoritative bodies. Since the mass trespass on Kinder Scout in 1932, outdoor recreation was increasingly accessible to people who also had greater freedoms, time and choice of leisure activities, and some local climbing clubs were catering to this interest in the inter war years.²⁹ This evolved further thanks largely to the growth of new climbing clubs – such as Rock and Ice, formed in 1951 – that carried considerable reputations in climbing circles. These clubs concentrated on British rock climbing, and they played an important role in bringing new groups to the crags, some of the best of whom used this as a precursor to the greater ranges. Joe Brown was one of the first prominent working-class elite climbers who, along with Don Whillans and others, were members of the Rock and Ice club which started and subsequently shaped their mountaineering careers.³⁰ Contrary to the

²⁷ Morgan, *The People’s Peace*, 207.

²⁸ Osborne, ‘Gender and the Organisation of British Climbing’, 417; Walt Unsworth, *Everest: The Mountaineering History*, (London: Bâton Wicks, 2000), 254.

²⁹ Howard Hill, *Freedom to Roam: The Struggle for Access to Britain’s Moors and Mountains*, (Ashbourne: Moorland Publishing, 1980).

³⁰ Trevor Jones and Geoff Milburn, *Welsh Rock*, (Glossop: Pic Publications, 1986), 107; Joe Brown, *The Hard Years*, (London: Phoenix Books, 2007), 65-70.

Himalayan expeditions backed by the established bodies, members of the Rock and Ice were finding that “a weekend in Wales was a special occasion”, according to Brown.³¹

Working-class clubs such as Rock and Ice and the Creagh Dhu Mountaineering Club, formed in the inter-war years and based in Glasgow, helped bring new social groups to British climbing and later into international mountain regions.³² According to climber Dave Cook these clubs were not “inhibited by prevailing attitudes about what was possible and appropriate” and were often run in less structured, even anarchic ways.³³ As well as bringing a new class of climber to the mountains, they challenged other traditional perspectives. The Rock and Ice club, for instance “violated all of the norms of excessive safety and non-competition that had previously existed”.³⁴

Although small in number and membership, these clubs soon demonstrated their ability by establishing highly acclaimed routes on British crags. As Jones and Milburn noted when writing about the Rock and Ice, whilst having “scarcely two dozen members” by 1953 they had “changed the face of Welsh climbing” thanks to their approach and the number of new, difficult routes they tackled.³⁵ This new group of climbers was transforming at pace the grassroots in Britain and demonstrating that good performers could come from all walks of life. Unlike the social standing that was so important to the Alpine Club and RGS, status was insignificant compared with genuine ability. They were the mountaineering exemplification of an increasingly meritocratic society.

³¹ Brown, *The Hard Years*, 63.

³² David Brown, ‘The Big Drum: The Mutability of a Sporting Habitus: Mountaineering in Scotland as a Case Study’, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 44, no. 4 (2009), 318-320; 326.

³³ Trevor Jones and Geoff Milburn, *Cumbrian Rock*, (Glossop: Pic Publications, 1988), 160.

³⁴ Peter Donnelly, ‘Social Climbing: A Case Study of the Changing Class Structure of Rock Climbing and Mountaineering in Britain’, in Andrew Miracle, C. Roger Rees and Aiden Dunleavy, eds., *Studies in the Sociology of Sport: Referred Proceedings of the 2nd Annual Conference of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport*, (Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1982), 23.

³⁵ Jones and Milburn, *Welsh Rock*, 117.

The Rock and Ice club broke up in 1958 after problems with subscription payments, and a general drifting apart of the group. Although it reformed shortly after it found it did “not have the same dominant position it had had previously”,³⁶ yet it remained active to some degree even in the 1970s.³⁷ In terms of influence over British rock climbing, another club, the Alpha, with more middle-class membership became important in British rock climbing following its formation in the mid-1950s, with the talented Pete Crew and Martin Boysen amongst its loosely organised ranks in the 1960s. The club would challenge the supremacy of the earlier climbers and although the membership may have resonated more closely with the older traditions of the climbing community, open competition and misleading and deceitful acts were a reflection of the diminished amateur values influencing how climbing was practised.³⁸

The role of such new climbing clubs demonstrated the broadening access to rock climbing (and mountaineering to an extent) and the open challenge to norms, and strongly influenced the wider established community. Although the Alpine Club had been involved in the earlier Everest expeditions, its role was now starting to diminish resulting in accusations that it was somewhat stuck in the past, “unprepared to accept the conquest of the impossible by siege tactics and the wholesale employment of mechanical aids.”³⁹ It could not necessarily be seen as representative of leading, or aspiring, mountaineers.

³⁶ Jones and Milburn, *Welsh Rock*, 128-132.

³⁷ Writing about the club’s annual dinner in 1973, *Rocksport* noted how it was a very close-knit group which was “very much alive”, where members all knew one another and where prospective members needed to fit in with the crowd. Interestingly, looking at the professions of the club members in that year, whilst Brown and Whillans were making a living from their climbing, others were printers, retailers, lecturer, involved in outdoor pursuits centres and police officers, suggesting that the club’s social spectrum had widened. ‘The Rock and Ice Twenty One Today’, *Rocksport*, (February 1973), 16-18.

³⁸ Jones and Milburn, *Welsh Rock*, 137, 154.

³⁹ Jenkins, *Chronicles of John R. Jenkins*, 131-132.

With an ageing membership primarily of a certain social mould, and difficulties adapting its attitudes to post-war Britain, the Alpine Club in the 1950s was, according to Thompson, “in imminent danger of becoming extinct”.⁴⁰ Newer elite climbers in the 1950s and 1960s, many arising from the young climbing clubs, regarded the Alpine Club as out of date and “hostile towards and critical of a younger generation’s activities”, so fewer became members.⁴¹ Instead, a newer club known as the Alpine Climbing Group (ACG) was founded in 1954 to serve some of this disenchanted new generation, one in which attracting attention through ventures such as televised climbs was not frowned upon and where more modern climbing methods were embraced.

The ACG, conceived by Tom Bourdillon who was part of Hunt’s Everest expedition and who so nearly succeeded on Everest mere days before Hillary and Tenzing, was described as “more an association than a club”, a statement which reflected something of the wider social attitude towards the role and purpose of clubs.⁴² It was heavily influenced by French climbing particularly the magazine *Alpinisme*, that gave ACG members:

...an insight into contemporary climbing methods which was factual and unprejudiced; it showed us that it was a reasonable sport and not fanatical and it gave us a spur to try similar climbs.⁴³

Members had to be active elite climbers who needed to demonstrate high levels of competence to be admitted. The admittance criteria were described by secretary Nick Estcourt as existing in “its own inimitable anarchistic fashion”.⁴⁴ In many ways this helped the ACG to bridge the gap between newer working-class clubs such as Rock and Ice and the establishment.

⁴⁰ Simon Thompson, *Unjustifiable Risk?: A Social History of British Climbing*, (Milnthorpe: Cicerone, 2010), 238.

⁴¹ Jim Perrin, *The Villain: The Life of Don Whillans*, (London: Arrow Books Ltd, 2006), 133.

⁴² Brown, *The Hard Years*, 119.

⁴³ ‘Alpinisme’, *Bulletin of the Alpine Climbing Group*, (March 1955), 4.

⁴⁴ ‘Alpine Club and Editor’s Notes’, *Alpine Journal* 74 (1969), 352.

In a sign of difference from the Alpine Club, the ACG's membership was socially mixed, with middle-class, university educated climbers such as Chris Bonington and Ian McNaught-Davis on an equal footing with working-class climbers including Don Whillans and Joe Brown. In fact, class had no bearing on the ACG. While middle and working-class climbers had adventured alongside one another in the mid-nineteenth century, this was a case of paid working class professional guides climbing with amateur members of the Alpine Club, a very different relationship to that under the ACG where members were regarded as equals. Whillans recalled that at the inaugural ACG dinner, whilst he may have felt ill at ease with the university members this proved not to be an issue: "They could easily have ignored me, but they didn't. The climbing was the thing that mattered".⁴⁵

Comments from Nick Estcourt were intentional in explicitly differentiating the ACG from the Alpine Club. In pointed comments printed in the 1970 *Alpine Journal* – by which time the ACG and the Alpine Club were in the midst of a merger – he explained how, in light of expectedly absent club leadership, "the group will be able to lapse into its habitual disorganisation. This is perhaps both the strength and weakness of a club whose members are too keen on climbing to be bothered about clubs".⁴⁶ This comment could be regarded as a backhanded criticism of the Alpine Club, and it did reinforce the idea that the ACG was very different in nature – perhaps closer to the mind-set of the Rock and Ice club than the Alpine Club.

In the same 1970 article, Estcourt reminded readers of the "qualifications" for joining the ACG which focussed mainly on the completion of six alpine style climbs of certain difficulty and length.⁴⁷ Members were clearly such on merit, further reflected by the fact that all of a mixed-class 1955 Himalayan expedition were part of the ACG.⁴⁸ Although overall membership was small – a members list of 1971

⁴⁵ Perrin, *The Villain*, 135.

⁴⁶ 'Alpine Club and Editor's Notes', *Alpine Journal* 75 (1970), 285-6.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ 'The Mountain Year – 1955', *Bulletin of the Alpine Climbing Group*, (April 1956).

showed 84 active members from the UK and Europe – this alternative social arrangement was hugely significant for the future of British mountaineering.⁴⁹

After some years of separate existence, the ACG and the Alpine Club eventually began to merge in the late 1960s in a clear signal that the mountaineering world was changing. The merger was not without its opponents, some of whom harked back to more traditional ideals. Within the Alpine Club, opposition was vocal and included claims that “Ordinary members did not wish to be regarded as second class... the ideology of the A.C.G. was different to the tradition of the A.C.”.⁵⁰ There was even one member who “disapproved of the Eiger direct”, an important progressive climb held in high international regard which intentionally courted much publicity, elements of competition and laying siege to the mountain.⁵¹ Supporters within the Alpine Club noted though that the ACG members “were undoubtedly competent mountaineers and did their best to encourage sound mountaineering”, but it is clear that amateur values remained important to some.⁵²

The Alpine Club and the ACG merged during a drawn-out process which started with a five-year trial period on 1st July 1967 following several years of negotiations.⁵³ At this time the ACG had an active membership of around sixty although members were moved to retired status after a short period of inactivity.⁵⁴ In discussing the merger, the Alpine Club was at pains to point out that the two groups were not in competition with one another. It was explained that the ACG had filled a gap in Alpinism progress in the post-war period whereas the Alpine Club had “been becoming less representative than in the past of British climbing generally, and especially less representative of the leaders of the

⁴⁹ ‘Alpine Climbing Group: Members Address List 1971’, *Alpine Climbing: The Bulletin of the Alpine Climbing Group* 1971, (1971), 91-2.

⁵⁰ ‘Note of discussion of proposals concerning the Alpine Climbing Group on 25th October, 1966’, AC, Club Circulars 1963-1969, 1922/ACTS44, 1.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ A. K. Rawlinson, ‘The Alpine Club and the Alpine Climbing Group’, *Alpine Journal* 72 (1967), 200.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 199.

currently active generation”.⁵⁵ Although some climbers held membership of the two associations it was observed that over the years prior to the merger “the overlap has shown signs of diminishing”.⁵⁶ Yet by coming together the Alpine Club could not only boost its ailing membership, but also ensure that its expanded members base included the new elite. Indeed, in the 1970 *Alpine Journal* it was confirmed that “Membership of the Alpine Club applies automatically to all members of the Alpine Climbing Group”.⁵⁷

The Alpine Club recognised that it needed the ACG more than the other way around, and as such the coming together should be classed as a genuine merger rather than a de facto take over. Such a conclusion is strengthened by building on the earlier quote that the Alpine Club was no longer representative of elite British climbers, in conjunction with the recognition that “the foundation of its [Alpine Club’s] influence on the history of mountaineering, of its international status, and of its attraction for new members, has been the fact that most of the leading British mountaineers have belonged to it”.⁵⁸ Thus, had the Alpine Club not acted it would have become an irrelevance in the same way so many other traditional associations across society had.

The club adjusted its approach in other subtle ways too. In a departure from its more conservative roots, it began to welcome advertising in its *Alpine Journal*. A paper for the Alpine Club Committee in 1968 noted that the decrease in the number of *Alpine Journal* adverts and decrease in profits were affecting the journal, and that it was proposed that there be an increase in the number of adverts and

⁵⁵ Ibid., 198.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 198.

⁵⁷ ‘Alpine Club and Editor’s Notes’, *Alpine Journal* 75 (1970), 287.

⁵⁸ Rawlinson, ‘Alpine Club and Alpine Climbing Group’, 198.

an increase in the costs.⁵⁹ Such an overt commercial presence in the Alpine Club's treasured periodical also signified the gradual welcoming of more modern pressures and practices.

Timing was important for the Alpine Club. Making the concession when it did meant that the name of the Alpine Club remained important and it was not swept aside. It also demonstrated how it was not possible to completely break from the past 'establishment' as it was ultimately the Alpine Club that remained, an example perhaps of Sandbrook's contention that the period involved a balance between change alongside remaining feelings of conservatism.⁶⁰ Thompson has explained that the merger "succeeded in making just enough concessions to modernity [for the Alpine Club] to survive" whilst retaining its traditional character.⁶¹ Whilst this is true, Thompson does not reflect that although the club continued, its relevance as a body that was once proudly name-dropped and was central to British mountaineering achievement, was sharply diminished.

As well as different social groups having new opportunities to become involved in elite mountaineering, other changing conditions were also important. Some in the 'establishment' had previously held strong views about earning from mountaineering. Criticised since the 1850s by the likes of John Ruskin who was "disgusted by the showiness" of Albert Smith's popular Piccadilly show about his ascent of Mont Blanc, the issue of pursuit of publicity and earnings remained disputed into the 1930s.⁶² Thomas Graham Brown, editor of the *Alpine Journal* in the late 1940s and early 1950s, had suspicions of payment of Everest mountaineers during the 1930s, and an opinion on its implications.⁶³ He wrote of the "dangers" arising from associating income with climbing, including

⁵⁹ Alan Blackshaw, 'The Alpine Journal Over the Next Few Years', May 28, 1968, AC, Club Circulars 1963-1969, 1922/ACTS44.

⁶⁰ Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good*.

⁶¹ Thompson, *Unjustifiable Risk*, 239.

⁶² Fergus Fleming, *Killing Dragons*, (London: Granta Publications, 2000), 158.

⁶³ T. Graham Brown handwritten note on Alpine Club letter headed paper, 07/11/1935, National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Acc 4338 209 (i).

through payments, after the precedent had been set in the 1920s during which some post-expedition Everest lecture takings were given to the climbers. For him, this “becomes a direct payment for mountaineering. It is not logical, because the best lecturer (or the best ‘draw’) is selected for the biggest lectures, and not the best mountaineers”.⁶⁴ In the main, he was concerned that the Alpine Club could be accused of hypocrisy since in the past the *Alpine Journal* had criticised similar actions in other countries.⁶⁵ Even in the 1950s paid guides were frowned upon. Alfred Gregory, who was part of the 1953 Everest expedition, remarked that “even though I was seconded by John Hunt, in those days it was almost impossible to join the [Alpine Club] if you had the stigma of ‘guide’, so I had to keep very quiet about that”, recognising that traditional perspectives were active in this era.⁶⁶

Style of climbing, be it location, equipment or approach, was an important issue at this time and was connected deeply with the social and practical development of the sport. After the first ascent of Everest in 1953, the way in which mountaineering was practised took on a different complexion. The large centrally funded expeditions organised by the MEC with many members were no longer popular, and new types of lightweight expedition were starting to take their place. With Everest climbed, there were new opportunities including other Himalayan expeditions, but there was a growing focus and renewed interest in the Alps which became the setting for other highly public climbing activities. It would become new and well-known routes in the Alps and in South America, that would take the attention of the climbing world and appeal to the general public for some years.⁶⁷ Indeed, details of Mount Everest Foundation (MEF) funds awarded between 1954 and 1965 shows the percentage of funded expeditions that were going to Europe was far higher than at any time since (up to 2001-02),

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Stephen Venables, ‘Balancing Act’, *Geographical* 70, no. 7 (1998).

⁶⁷ Ruthven notes how preference for Europe may have been in part because of maximum travel allowances as part of the grants. Bill Ruthven, ‘Changing Fashions in Expedition Grants’, *Alpine Journal* 107 (2002), 146.

accounting for around 15% of funding. South America also accounted for about 15% of funding. By contrast expeditions to the Himalayas and the Karakorum were much less than in later years.⁶⁸

The merger between the Alpine Club and the ACG therefore signified a changing sport in many respects. Most significantly it confirmed acceptance of a wider social mixture of climbers, magnified by the “direct voice [of the ACG] in the policy and affairs of the senior Club”.⁶⁹ By accepting ACG members into their number, both due to circumstances and changing values, the Alpine Club was accepting new styles of climbing and a new social perspective far from the exclusiveness it once insisted on. But it was also beginning to accept the commercialisation and career plans that already came with some of the ACG members.⁷⁰

In summing up the benefits of the merger from the Alpine Club’s perspective, in 1967 the *Alpine Journal* noted that:

It is now for all concerned, to see to it that the opportunities which have been created are used. Each generation of mountaineers differs from its predecessors. It learns from its elders, discards ideas which have lost their usefulness, and adds its own contributions. Let us continue, in the future as in the past, within the fellowship of the Club, the Alpine Club.⁷¹

This shift in attitude was important in enabling the sport to modernise. Although real meritocracy was far from complete as acceptance of women members on the same terms as men did not occur until 1974 (and even then it was not a unanimous decision), these changes were a substantial step forward.⁷²

⁶⁸ Ibid., 147.

⁶⁹ Rawlinson, ‘Alpine Club and Alpine Climbing Group’, 197-8.

⁷⁰ Jack Longland, ‘Valedictory Address’, *Alpine Journal* 82 (1977), 3.

⁷¹ Rawlinson, ‘Alpine Club and Alpine Climbing Group’, 200.

⁷² Alpine Club circular, June 1974, AC, AC Circulars 1969-74, 1922/ACTS43.

Importantly, it was the overall declining importance of the Alpine Club that was the most influential change to emerge as it went on to play a more limited role in the main post-war achievements. Having facilitated changes, the Alpine Club as well as the other establishment organisations, became less relevant as the decades passed. The opening up of the body showed that the sport was changing significantly, but it was individual actions and decisions that were the real catalysts for change. Unlike an organisation that took several years to facilitate a reluctant merger, key entrepreneurs were more nimble and better positioned to introduce new ideas and behaviours and in doing so it was these individuals – rather than organisations – that brought mountaineering into the limelight. Indeed, as the individual profiles later in this chapter will show, it was their ideas and pursuits that set mountaineering on a more modern path, and this was to happen regardless of the Alpine Club.

As indicated by the perspectives of ACG members, the newer breed of climbers from the late 1950s and the 1960s were less concerned by tradition and norms – in some cases opting not to become Alpine Club members prior to the merger. This freed them up to become involved in evolving forms of the sport including sponsored climbs in the Alps, new international expeditions and televised climbs. This led, in turn, to a growing appreciation that mountaineering was now, more than ever, a saleable commodity, be it through selling story rights to a newspaper, lecturing or writing one's own pieces in the new commercial magazines. Furthermore, whereas before the mid-1950s the limited commercial opportunities that were in place (as discussed in the next section) were made by established bodies, they were soon increasingly instigated by individuals. Chris Bonington was quick to realise the opportunities, whilst Don Whillans, Joe Brown, Hamish MacInnes and others became involved in a similar fashion. Based on ability and salesmanship they could connect directly with commercial opportunity by bypassing the historic roles of the Alpine Club, RGS or MEC whose very existence pivoted around the idea of placing a climber from a British expedition on the summit of Everest. However, as part of this transition it is important to recognise that the first post-war demonstration of the economic potential of the sport came from the Everest expeditions of the 1950s.

Everest 1953

Although historians have debated how widespread fundamental change was for British society in the 1950s and 1960s, there is little argument about some of the key moments in these difficult years. In the midst of post-war austerity and new norms, the Queen's 1953 Coronation brought about feelings of a new beginning and reinforced collective attitudes, in particular what it meant to be British and a renewed pride in the country. Kynaston's description of the Coronation conveyed a real sense of anticipation and 'mania' in the build-up, but it was what the event meant for how society viewed itself that was critical. Quoting Michael Young and Edward Shils, Kynaston notes how the Coronation was "'an act of national communion'" and one that "'knit together'" families in a feeling of nationalism and "'identification with the monarchy'".⁷³ The timing of Everest success, being reported on the day of the Coronation, served to reinforce the invented tradition of mountaineering and national identity.

Kynaston returned to this theme in a later discussion on the role of sporting moments, specifically Bannister's four-minute mile. He explained that although the achievement may not have been as amateur as it may have been portrayed, "it was still the apogee of the determinedly hopeful, optimistic 'New Elizabethan' moment".⁷⁴ Like the Coronation, Bannister's run was an important contributor to feelings of national identity and pride. Coming soon after the ascent of Everest, these two significant British sporting moments played an important role in the national narrative. As specific achievements they contrasted against a declining nation that could not reclaim its pre-war prestige with success in contested sporting arenas. Given the amateur ethos that seemed to be behind both achievements it was easy to see why they were regarded as achievements with a legacy in a more traditional Britain.

As noted earlier, the first ascent of Everest coupled with its sporting and national significance has been widely written about. Significant national pride and value was placed on the climb, which was the culmination of a series of organised expeditions commencing in the 1920s. The 1953 climb was

⁷³ David Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951-57*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 307.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 386.

organised by the same aforementioned governance groups as these earlier years which, alongside the financial aspects of the ascent, are key interests for this thesis. The detail of the 1953 ascent is not retold here, other than to provide context for the changes that arose in the years after and illustrate how new funding opportunities came into being.

Although organised by the same groups as the 1920s and 1930s efforts, it is notable that the expeditions of the 1950s were already tentatively breaking from amateur norms. Here there are similarities with Bale's conclusion that Roger Bannister's four-minute mile was not as amateur as has been imagined.⁷⁵ Indeed, on Everest a more business-minded approach was being adopted. The selection of John Hunt over Eric Shipton as expedition leader in 1953 has been cited as evidence that a more professional and well-planned expedition was desired. Shipton, the expected choice, was seen as a less effective leader and more of a public personality, and did not fit the growing calls for a more organised approach. Hunt, by contrast, had such skills in abundance thanks to his armed forces career, and after careful consideration, he was appointed to lead the climb.⁷⁶ In Gilchrist's opinion this was "symbolic of the decline of the gentleman amateur in climbing and in society more generally",⁷⁷ despite Hunt still demonstrating some traditional perspectives.⁷⁸ This change was not limited to leadership. In a relaxation of amateur ideals of a fair 'man versus nature' battle, there was growing appreciation of the role that science and specialisation could play. This was exemplified by the

⁷⁵ Bale's study looks again at whether Bannister was a "sort of pre-modern runner, a runner who was out of place in the modern, post-war world of sports". John Bale, *Roger Bannister and the Four-Minute Mile: Sports Myth and Sports History*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 11.

⁷⁶ Conefrey, *Everest 1953*, 58-79.

⁷⁷ Paul Gilchrist, 'Heroic Leadership, Mountain Adventure and Englishness: John Hunt and Chris Bonington Compared', in Christopher Hart, ed., *Heroines and Heroes: Symbolism Embodiment, Narratives & Identity*, (Kingswinford: Midrash, 2008), 253.

⁷⁸ For instance, Harry Ayres who had previously been invited by Shipton was excluded as an expedition member due to his role as a paid guide. See Conefrey, *Everest 1953*, 67, 88.

selection on the team of scientist Griffith Pugh, an expert in supplementary oxygen which was to be used to aid the climbers on the mountain's highest slopes.⁷⁹

Perhaps the most significant sign of a new attitude was the increased importance placed on commercial arrangements both before, and especially after, the expedition. Securing a £10,000 fee from *The Times* to cover the 1953 expedition was substantial and a major factor in enabling the climb to take place and be relatively well provisioned. The MEC welcomed the funding, though it still displayed its amateur concerns by not taking up larger sums from less reputable papers – a decision Conefrey ascribes to “a constant fear of sensational reporting”.⁸⁰ In addition, involvement was secured from corporate sources including ICI and Rolex, who went on to launch a new watch model “to celebrate the victorious ascent of Everest”.⁸¹

After the successful ascent, commercial exploitation was considerable. Lecture tours were an important opportunity and one which the MEC sought to maximise by, for instance, arranging an American tour with the contract for organising it going to “the promoter who guaranteed the highest return”.⁸² These, alongside a popular film of the expedition ensured not only an income, but additional value as “British propaganda” as it cemented the national importance of the climb.⁸³ Indeed, the film

⁷⁹ See Harriet Tuckey, *Everest – The First Ascent: The Untold Story of Griffith Pugh, the Man Who Made It Possible*, (London: Random House, 2013).

⁸⁰ Conefrey, *Everest 1953*, 6.

⁸¹ Rolex appeared in association with the climb, with members presented with inscribed Rolex watches before departing. See Simon Garfield, ‘High Society’, *The Observer Magazine: The Everest Issue*, 30 March, 2003, 30; ‘Rolex Watches History: 1953-1967’, *Rolex Website*, online <https://www.rolex.com/rolex-history/1953-1967.html> (accessed August 24, 2016); Conefrey, ‘Everest, 1953’, 94. See also advert in ‘The First Ascent of Mount Everest Supplement’, *The Times*, July 1953, 4.

⁸² Conefrey, *Everest 1953*, 271.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 268, 270-3.

was so widely watched that Donnelly noted how "almost every child in Britain was taken on a school trip" to see it,⁸⁴ and the expedition book, *The Ascent of Everest*, proved very popular.⁸⁵

By early 1955 an unanticipated income of £121,000 had been generated.⁸⁶ Such success led to the closure of the MEC in the same year, and the new Mount Everest Foundation (MEF) being set up in its place to distribute grants to climbing and exploration expeditions based on these funds. The MEF's constitution was unanimously approved in December 1955 by the Alpine Club.⁸⁷ Its original ambition was "To encourage, or support, (whether financially or otherwise) expeditions for the exploration of, and research into the geology, ethnology, zoology, and similar sciences of the mountain regions of the world".⁸⁸ With the willingness to distribute grants to a greater variety of expeditions and personnel, this was also a sign of a move from the gentlemanly approach of authorising, managing and committing resources to an expedition, to one that was more meritocratic and where funds were more accessible to different expeditions.

The way that the success of 1953 was capitalised on in terms of both finances and publicity confirmed the fundamental change in attitude since the immediate post-war period. In 1945 a BMC committee affirmed that "publicity should not be given to mountaineering and that there should be no 'popularisation' of it", going so far as to reject a 1947 request to stage a "public demonstration of rock-climbing at Earls Court".⁸⁹ With the success on Everest and the emergence of greater personal freedoms and interest in outdoors recreation and sports – encouraged by the likes of the Boy Scouts and Outward Bound programmes – this had substantially changed by the early 1950s. Success on Everest coupled with the increasing trend for British sports to take a more commercially-minded

⁸⁴ Donnelly, 'Social Climbing', 23.

⁸⁵ John Hunt, *The Ascent of Everest*, (London: Tandem, 1973).

⁸⁶ Conefrey, *Everest 1953*, 271.

⁸⁷ 'Proceedings of the Alpine Club, 1955-7', *Alpine Journal* 61 (1957), 582-3.

⁸⁸ Ruthven, 'Changing Fashions', 144.

⁸⁹ Geoff Milburn, *The First Fifty Years of the British Mountaineering Council*, (Manchester: British Mountaineering Council, 1997), 10.

approach to maximise forms of income and awareness made it impossible not to popularise the sport in its immediate aftermath.

The gradual adoption of commercial thinking in the period leading up to and following the climb was hugely influential. It was the financial successes and public interest that led others to see mountaineering as not only a form of leisure, but one offering economic opportunity. However, after the climb it increasingly became individuals rather than authorities such as the MEC that would seek to maximise monetary benefits. The MEF, succeeding the MEC, concentrated on distribution of grants, so future climbers could not rely on organisational presence of the establishment to make connections with business and fund expeditions – they needed to do this themselves. Following the commercial positives and the fame that success on Everest brought for Hillary, Tenzing, Hunt, and others, the newer breed of elite climbers demonstrated early on that the sport had earning potential, albeit quite limited. For instance, Ed Douglas' view on climbing in the 1950s was that it "couldn't pay the rent... Hardly anyone in Britain did it".⁹⁰

However, even if the early opportunities were limited, this did not deter some elite climbers from trying, including one of the ambitious newer members on the scene. From as early as 1957 Chris Bonington realised that there were opportunities within the sport. When frustrated by his career in the Army he expressed not only his desire to leave when he could, but he made an important decision that would change the course of his life and the way mountaineering would be consumed by the British public. In a letter to his mother – cited at the very beginning of this thesis – he wrote that:

I think I shall try to take up climbing professionally. It is a thing I love, and a thing I am good at, even if it does not lead very far.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Ed Douglas, 'The Observer Profile: Chris Bonington', *The Observer*, May 30, 1999.

⁹¹ Letter from Chris Bonington to Helen Bonington, July 1, 1957, MHT, CBO/04/01/02.

Having taught at the Army Outward Bound School in the mid to late 1950s, he explained later how he “quickly discovered that I was too interested in my own climbing to become a good teacher... and longed to escape on to harder routes which would tax my ability to the full”.⁹² Although it would take several years before Bonington could establish his own reputation and connect with the wider public, this deliberate choice of pursuing a career from mountaineering was a major step forward and one which, had it been made before 1953, would have been unrealistic and would likely have caused consternation amongst the climbing establishment. The quote reveals too how this potential career blended work and leisure, although it still was perhaps an unlikely means of earning a living.

The ascent of Everest placed a British expedition at centre stage and the connections between mountaineering and national identity were clear. As a sporting moment it was pivotal and has been associated by mountaineering academics and others to the role of Britain, imperialism and national pride.⁹³ Yet it was the notoriety *that followed* for the expedition members which opened up opportunities for other individuals, changing perspectives that traditionally followed the sport.

The mainstream prominence of the ascent meant that the sport more widely could no longer exist as a small insular sub-culture. The climb, and mountaineering more generally, had become prominent and high profile. From 1953 onwards many major expeditions with British membership would attract the attention of the national news and this wider appreciation was also important in creating the conditions for connecting new entrepreneurs to bigger opportunities. Furthermore, the ascent was pivotal in shifting mountaineering from a collective sport into one that was more individual as climbing personalities became widely known and central in its transformation. The experiences of four

⁹² Chris Bonington, *I Chose to Climb* in *Boundless Horizons: The Autobiography of Chris Bonington*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000), 80.

⁹³ Peter L. Bayers, *Imperial Ascent: Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire*, (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 99-114; Gordon T. Stewart, ‘Tenzing’s Two Wrist-Watches: The Conquest of Everest and Late Imperial Culture in Britain 1921-1953’, *Past and Present* 149 (1995), 170-197; Gordon T. Stewart, ‘Tenzing’s Two Wrist-Watches: The Conquest of Everest and Late Imperial Culture in Britain 1921-1953: Reply’, *Past and Present* 157 (1997), 178-190.

individuals who reshaped the sport considerably across the 1950s and 1960s are charted over the coming pages. So too are the implications of this on the growing commercial links to mountaineering, its changing links with the media and the new entrepreneurial ideas and developments which often led to an increasingly professional outlook by those involved. The post-Everest process of visible and significant change commenced just two years later as a working-class climber – Joe Brown – found himself on a high profile British climb in another area of the Himalaya.

Joe Brown

Born in Lancashire in 1930 to a large working-class family, Joe Brown was a leading rock climber in Britain in the post-war years. Brown was the first to climb a considerable number of highly regarded pioneering climbs in England and Wales, many of which, like ‘Cenotaph Corner’ on the Llanberis Pass, remain both popular and challenging today. He was amongst the first working-class climbers to establish himself in the previously socially limited mountaineering scene, achieving both notable expedition successes and becoming a figurehead in the breaking down of class lines, and this important role began in the mid-1950s.

Given his background and profession (he was a general builder), Brown’s involvement on expeditions in the 1950s was an early indication of how the sport was moving away from its amateur traditions. This began with his inclusion on a high profile 1955 climb. Following on the heels of Everest success, a smaller scale expedition travelled to the 8,000m peak, Kanchenjunga. Despite Brown having demonstrated his ability on new and difficult British climbs it was still a major shift for expedition members not to be former Oxbridge graduates, Army officers or established Alpine Club members. The justification for including him was neatly summed up by leader Charles Evans who explained how Brown’s “climbs in Britain and in the Alps had already won him a remarkable reputation”.⁹⁴ His inclusion was a significant change, with Osborne explaining how this broke the longstanding

⁹⁴ Charles Evans, *Kangchenjunga: The Untrodden Peak*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1956), 12.

“precedent” of the same types of climbers from similar backgrounds being included on such expeditions.⁹⁵ Brown was included amongst an expedition team that included people of different backgrounds, including a civil engineer (Norman Hardie), pharmacist (Tom McKinnon) and Army captain (Tony Streater).⁹⁶

Upon being invited, Brown asked what the financing arrangements were and was told it was all taken care of; that “all expenses would be paid”.⁹⁷ It was the MEF that was paying for these expenses from the post-Everest income and for the rest of the expedition. Whilst the MEF more commonly distributed modest grants of around a few hundred or thousand pounds, the effort on Kanchenjunga was paid for in full by the Foundation, maintaining for a little longer the overt role played by mountaineering’s governance arrangements. Some £13,652 was given to pay for the eight members and all other expedition expenses in 1955.⁹⁸ Such a substantial grant was certainly exceptional, but it came early in the existence of the MEF where its objectives and expectations were less clear. However, it was stated in a 2000 review of five decades of the MEF that the expedition was backed so strongly because it was hoped a British team would be first to reach the top of another of the fourteen 8,000m peaks, suggesting that at this point in its history the MEF had a relatively short term perspective which would change in the years that followed.⁹⁹

The Kanchenjunga team makeup was a remarkable mixture of climbers given the time. Not only had the Everest expedition two years previous maintained a mostly establishment membership, by 1955 Britain was only just on the cusp of experiencing extensive changes in social mobility. The term

⁹⁵ Carol Osborne, ‘An Extraordinary Joe: The Working-Class Climber as Hero’, in Stephen Wagg and Dave Russell, eds., *Sporting Heroes of the North*, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Northumbria Press, 2010), 57.

⁹⁶ George Band, ‘Kangchenjunga Climbed’, *Himalayan Journal* 19 (1955-56), online <http://www.himalayanclub.org/journal/kangchenjunga-climbed/> (accessed February 8, 2014).

⁹⁷ Brown, *The Hard Way*, 103.

⁹⁸ Band, *Summit*, 157.

⁹⁹ Bill Ruthven, ‘Mount Everest Foundation at Climb 99’, *High* 207 (2000), 8-9.

'meritocracy' became popularised in the 1950s thanks in large part to Michael Young's *The Rise of Meritocracy*, and has been traced back to the Education Act of 1944, which saw schooling and higher education create new opportunities for those who previously had few.¹⁰⁰ This was far from a comprehensive overhaul though.¹⁰¹ Indeed, although changes were emerging by this time and "traditional hierarchal rigidities... were weakened", none disappeared.¹⁰² Nonetheless, social change was afoot and new norms were being created whereby people could achieve based on ability, just as Brown experienced.

Brown recalled his surprise and delight at being invited by Charles Evans to the expedition and noted that the team was selected by Evans to be "a dependable body of climbers and for an ability to get on with each other... That one person might be a professor and another a labourer had no relevance to climbing a mountain".¹⁰³ This was significant, especially given that the expedition, as well as being one of the first to be funded by the MEF, was "launched" by the Alpine Club and had support from the RGS, implying little reluctance from these traditional societies.¹⁰⁴ Evans' team make-up seemed to work well. He explained in a letter how "I have a first class lot of chaps – couldn't be better", intimating that Brown was not viewed differently.¹⁰⁵ Although most sport governing bodies in the 1950s prior to the more sweeping changes "appeared to embody the very essence of Victorianism, not least in their

¹⁰⁰ Michael Young, *The Rise of Meritocracy*, (London: Transaction Publishers, 1958).

¹⁰¹ Kynaston has cited examples of lower achievements for working-class pupils within grammar schools that were expected to increase mobility, and early school exit amongst working class children as reasons for why the fifties was only "somewhat" more meritocratic than earlier decades. 'Start the Week', BBC, aired 24 June, 2013, online <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b02yjf15> (accessed 1 March, 2017).

¹⁰² Bernstein, *The Myth of Decline*, 680.

¹⁰³ Brown, *The Hard Way*, 102-112.

¹⁰⁴ Band, *Summit*, 144.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Charles Evans to Anne MacCandless, May 10, 1955, MHT, CEV/28.

reluctance to abandon gentlemanly amateurism and the anti-commercial ethos it incorporated”, this was clearly not entirely true in mountaineering.¹⁰⁶

The team succeeded in reaching the top of Kangchenjunga on 25 May, with Brown and George Band the summit pairing. However, following the recent ‘Everest-mania’ and with a peak somewhat lower in both height and public awareness, the success attracted relatively little national press reaction, even if John Hunt believed that “There is no doubt that those who first climb Kangchenjunga will achieve the greatest feat in mountaineering”.¹⁰⁷ For sponsors too, covering the story of a seemingly (to the unknowledgeable) lesser peak held less appeal, suggesting to Osborne “that with the fall of Everest the ability of climbing to capture the public’s imagination was considered to have had its day”.¹⁰⁸ This was true for a time, but over the longer-term success in 1953 spurred on more opportunity for others.

Whilst not a commercial expedition in the sense that would become more common, the climb was significant in that the selection of Brown was a departure from the previously prevailing amateur ethos, and one that recognised the best climbers were needed.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, here was the venerable MEC selecting a working-class climber for a high profile climb and praising him afterwards, at around the same time that the civil service was seen as “still too conservative to bestow a knighthood on a working-class footballer [Stanley Matthews]”.¹¹⁰ These were reflections of what Marwick has described as a British society in the 1960s and early 1970s that was “more classless in some respects”.¹¹¹ In fact, Osborne has explained how Brown’s inclusion was ahead of its time: “it would

¹⁰⁶ Porter, ‘More than a Game’, 126.

¹⁰⁷ Band, ‘Kangchenjunga Climbed’.

¹⁰⁸ Osborne, ‘An Extraordinary Joe’, 58.

¹⁰⁹ There are some who report that the expedition put money back into the MEF coffers. See ‘The Finances of the Mount Everest Foundation’, *Mountain* 44 (1975), 15.

¹¹⁰ Martin Johnes and Gavin Mellor, ‘The 1953 FA Cup Final: Modernity and Tradition in British Culture’, *Contemporary British History* 20, no. 2 (2006), 274.

¹¹¹ Marwick, *British Society*, 154.

perhaps be more accurate to say that Brown's selection *pre-empted* changes afoot... more generally, rather than being representative of them".¹¹² Coming so soon after the relatively traditionally run Everest ascent in 1953 it is clear that it could only signal early stages of significant change.

Underscoring its importance, Jack Longland, Alpine Club president between 1973 and 1976 and later panellist on *Any Questions*,¹¹³ said at the end of his term in 1977 regarding the greater social mixture of climbers that:

I have greatly welcomed the astonishing coalescence of the 2 (sic) strands in British climbing, which for me has always been symbolized by the happy presence together, on the near-top of Kanchenjunga, of Joe Brown, plumber, of Manchester, and George Band, geologist, and ex-President of the Cambridge UMC.

He went on to add "So I take for granted, and salute, the great social mixing-pot of present-day mountaineering."¹¹⁴ This moment was defining for mountaineering itself, Brown and the way the sport was perceived.

MEF funding facilitated this climb and made it possible for the varied team to take to the mountain's slopes. Whilst the MEF's role to disburse monies raised by the successful Everest climb was arguably good for the sport, the arrangement had its downsides too. By controlling some of the purse strings, the MEF had influence over the direction of the sport. As reported in the mid-1970s, "The M.E.F. vets and advises any expedition that applies for assistance, and the advice usually carries weight". However, the body retained a strong RGS influence, as had its predecessor the MEC. This influence affected not who was climbing, but what was going to be climbed such that it "has tended to favour

¹¹² Osborne, 'An Extraordinary Joe', 59.

¹¹³ Michael Westmacott, 'Obituary: Sir Jack Longland', *The Independent*, December 4, 1993, online <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-sir-jack-longland-1465146.html> (accessed February 8, 2014).

¹¹⁴ Jack Longland, 'Valedictory Address', *Alpine Journal* 82, (1977), 9.

expeditions with an exploratory or scientific element”.¹¹⁵ This meant that repeats of established routes were unlikely to receive funds whilst different trends meant that some areas of the world were more likely to be aided by the MEF at certain times. Ruthven has shown how different countries and areas were excluded at different times for eligibility for a grant, whilst later on the expedition style, particularly alpine style versus siege style was also subjected to preference or criteria from the committee.¹¹⁶

A decade later the funding requirements of the MEF made it explicitly different to its predecessor, the MEC. It was noted in 1968 that “The Foundation does not normally expect to provide the major part of an expeditions (sic) funds. You should therefore be able to indicate to us that a large proportion has already been raised”.¹¹⁷ Whereas before, the MEC would pay for expeditions in large part or in full, arranging contracts with newspapers to raise some of the funds themselves if necessary, the expectations to raise funds were now placed on the mountaineers or the organisers. If it was reasonable to expect that people had raised a large proportion of the funds, it was reasonable to expect that on occasions such funding would have come from commercial arrangements. This was a fundamental change. No longer were expeditions funded on the back of who those involved knew or their personal background, but if someone could raise most of the funds necessary the MEF would accept this and potentially give its own additional grant.

Furthermore, a newsletter preparing for a 1964 British Hindu-Kush Expedition revealed that grants were given with additional conditions, including accounting for circumstances where an expedition made a profit. The idea of turning a profit was new, even if it seemed so “non-existent other than some sensational epic”, and allowances were made for some of the grant to be repaid in such an event.¹¹⁸ It is interesting to recognise that only an exceptional climb in terms of a story – less so in

¹¹⁵ ‘The Finances of the Mount Everest Foundation’, *Mountain* 44 (1975), 15.

¹¹⁶ Ruthven, ‘Changing Fashions’, 144-5.

¹¹⁷ Mount Everest Foundation ‘To Applicants for Grants’ dated April 25, 1968, AC, Don Whillans Box 2, 1922/P48.

¹¹⁸ Newsletter for ‘British Hindu-Kush Expedition 1964’, April 30, 1964, AC, Don Whillans Box 1 Red, 1922/P48.

terms of a climbing achievement – was seen as the fundamental reason why an expedition might become profitable. This expectation around something untoward or beyond what was planned continued. A year later Bonington sent his mother a chapter of his Annapurna book and explained that “it was really hard to write – so much has been written about the Himalaya’s, and a well run expedition is a fairly monotonous business”, implying that when climbs went to plan they could be relatively unremarkable.¹¹⁹

For Brown, the Kanchenjunga ascent was merely the launch pad for his climbing career, offering earning potential into and beyond the 1960s. Although Osborne has suggested that the decisions Brown made relating to the pursuit of a high personal profile were for financial reasons rather than a desire to be seen as a celebrity, this does not mean that he shied away from using his reputation to enhance his commercial opportunity.¹²⁰ He was, in particular, able to capitalise on his success on Kanchenjunga in 1955 and his wider renown within climbing circles to establish a media presence, which continued after the Old Man of Hoy spectacular and other TV climbs to “keep him intermittently in the public eye” in the 1960s and beyond.¹²¹ Indeed, as one of the core group of climbers who appeared in televised climbs he could take advantage of the opportunities they presented.¹²²

Brown also contributed to other areas of more professionally-minded climbing related activity. In the sense of being a formally paid climber, he was a climbing instructor in Derbyshire, though it was the growing opportunity to capitalise on his personal brand that proved most important in his steps to pursue a climbing career.¹²³ Such commercial activity saw Brown endorse products including those of Helly-Hansen in the pages of *Mountain* magazine under the tag line “For the peak of performance Joe

¹¹⁹ Letter from Chris Bonington to Helen Bonington, April 10, 1965, MHT, CBO/04/01/03.

¹²⁰ Osborne, ‘An Extraordinary Joe’, 62.

¹²¹ Ibid., 61-2.

¹²² Malcolm Keogh, ‘The Genius of Joe Brown’, *Mirror Magazine*, May 5, 1963, 9.

¹²³ Patrick Monkhouse, ‘Making Room at the Top’, originally published in *The Guardian* October 27, 1967, reprinted in Nelsson, *On the Roof of the World*, 2396.

Brown wears and swears by Helly-Hansen of Norway” (Figure 1).¹²⁴ One of the most popular outdoors rucksacks of the 1960s was named after him – the Karrimor ‘Joe Brown’ rucksack, with another named after Don Whillans.¹²⁵

These developments demonstrated the strength of his reputation, and he took a more substantial commercial step by opening an outdoors shop, which advertised as early as 1968, and which still trades today.¹²⁶ This was significant because it capitalised on his personal brand by running under his own name and, coupled with his autobiography published in 1967, brought him to the brink of celebrity and widespread public renown.¹²⁷ Other climbers followed suit over subsequent years, trading on their names to sell goods to the burgeoning grassroots interest. Nick Estcourt ran his own climbing shop, as did Tut Braithwaite, while leading small expedition climber Joe Tasker would later use his name and connections in retail. A 1980 catalogue for his shop named *Mountain Magic* used imagery of a climb on the North ridge of Kanchenjunga and quotes from the climbers to highlight a “Windlite Jacket & Salopette”.¹²⁸



Figure 1 - Helly-Hansen advert featuring Joe Brown, 1971

¹²⁴ See advert with tag line and large photo of Brown. *Mountain* 14 (1971), 35.

¹²⁵ Rose and Parsons, *Invisible on Everest*, 225-228.

¹²⁶ See advert in *The Climber* 6 (1968), 381.

¹²⁷ Brown, *The Hard Years*.

¹²⁸ 'Mountain Magic 1980 Catalogue of Selected Equipment', MHT, TAS Box 2. See also *The British Mount Kongur Expedition to China* brochure, 1981, NLS, HP3.204.1942, 12.

The way in which Brown enhanced his role in the sport through numerous associated commercial activities would suggest that he made many deliberate decisions to base his career around his climbing ability, and knew this could be optimised by promoting his own personal brand. He capitalised on several of the options available to him as a climber to earn from his sport, concentrating in particular on various forms of media. He may not have maximised this opportunity – the intrusion on his personal life reportedly led him to “refuse a £1000 lecture fee” – but he did invest significant entrepreneurial effort to build and expand his successful personal brand.¹²⁹

Don Whillans

Don Whillans was born in 1933 and like Brown was brought up in a Lancastrian working class family. Following his introduction to the mountains, Whillans quickly proved himself to be a natural climber, able to pick out routes not apparent to others. He followed the ‘typical’ climbing introductions, excelling firstly on British crags, followed by the Alps and eventually the greater ranges. Like Brown – and often alongside him – Whillans was responsible for many of the innovative and exciting new rock climbing routes in Britain and migrated into more remote mountaineering expeditions thanks to his skill, tough and uncompromising attitude and excellent judgement. Following his early efforts and the reputation that this quickly earned him, Whillans was well placed to make his pursuits in the mountains a more substantial part of his life plans. For Whillans in the 1960s this tended to include areas of the media, including lecturing and television appearances as well as commercial opportunities from product endorsement, all of which were a prelude to other varied opportunities in later years.

Lecturing opportunities were clearly on the minds of the post-1953 protagonists and Whillans was chief amongst them. Offering an entertaining way to tell a story about a climb, lecturing had been a staple part of mountaineering communications for decades. Lectures that followed the early reconnaissance attempts on Everest, for example, involved many of the expedition team, but already

¹²⁹ Jones and Milburn, *Cumbrian Rock*, 151.

by the 1950s and 1960s it was the pull of specific individuals that determined whether lecturing would be fruitful for climbers. If they could draw an audience, climbers found lecture tours becoming a routine part of their earning repertoire.

Even in the late 1950s, lecturing was becoming more important for such climbers. Hamish MacInnes, with whom Chris Bonington climbed the South West Pillar of the Dru in 1958, wrote to Bonington commenting on photography used in a recent *Alpine Journal* article remarking that “The one [photograph] of the traverse on to the base of the Pillar is the most shit making that I have seen for years and there are one or two other (sic) which will be suitable for lecture work”.¹³⁰ MacInnes went on to state in his letter that “I am doing quite a bit of lecturing this winter and would like loan of them [the photos]”, clearly indicating that in 1958 the exploits in the Alps were already attracting demand from other climbers or non-climbers who would potentially attend MacInnes’ lectures.¹³¹ Whillans was also a lecturing regular. In brochures pre-dating 1965, he listed nine separate lecture options, including talks on the Alps, Trivor and Torres del Paine.¹³² An updated brochure, likely after 1966, included 15 lectures types, updated to include additional options of Masherbrum, Eiger Direct and Gauri Sankar, and four technique-related lectures,¹³³ and Whillans was still lecturing at the end of the 1960s.¹³⁴

The Masherbrum lecture likely related to an expedition he was part of on the mountain that came within 150ft of the summit. Indeed, this 1957 climb included some small-scale sponsorship having been organised by the Rucksack Club and partly backed by the *Guardian*. Newspapers were keen to report on expeditions and as such they became important backers for many climbs during this period.

¹³⁰ Letter from Hamish MacInnes to Chris Bonington October 12, 1958, MHT, CBO/04/01/01.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² This was perhaps as early as the early 1960s as a forward to the brochure from John Hunt is dated October 27, 1962.

‘Mountaineering Lectures by Don Whillans’ lecture brochure, undated, AC, Don Whillans Box Ref 7 “Lectures”, 1922/P48.

¹³³ ‘Don Whillans FRGS’ lecture brochure, undated, AC, Don Whillans Box Ref 7 “Lectures”, 1922/P48.

¹³⁴ See advert for lecture on Cordillera Blanca Expedition 1968 in *The Climber* 7 (1968), 45.

In some situations, such funding was required to get the expedition off the ground whilst in others the fee for a story would effectively be an income for those involved. To cover the Masherbrum climb £500 was sought “in exchange for a number of features and pictures”, though a lower offer of £300 was accepted “even though the climbers knew they could probably get more from one of the ‘more sensation-loving papers’”, a sign that full commercial exploitation and profit maximisation was not necessarily the main aim.¹³⁵ This was supplemented by a £1,500 MEF grant.¹³⁶

Newspaper interest in mountaineering evidently continued after the *Sunday Times*’ backing of the Everest 1953 climb. Indeed, just as individual climbers witnessed the personal fame and opportunity that followed the ascent, newspapers too increasingly appreciated the benefits of a connection to mountaineering. Two years before the Masherbrum attempt, an expedition led by Sydney Wignall was sponsored by the *Liverpool Daily Post*. The expedition’s target was Gurla Mandhata in Tibet. In a sign of things to come, even in 1955 gimmicks became important. Wignall planned to plant three flags on the summit of the mountain, located in Chinese-occupied Tibet, one Welsh flag, one Chinese Republic flag and “a skull-and-crossbones sewn by his wife to represent the ‘privateering nature’ of the project.”¹³⁷ Not only did the print media pay for coverage rights, but they often were paying for the climbers to write copy. Certainly, this was true for Bonington and others later on, whilst one climbing member on Nuptse in 1961 was Jim Lovelock, a freelance journalist who wrote reports for the *Daily Telegraph*.¹³⁸

Whillans also found extensive opportunity from the newly televised form of climbing. Television was transformative in its social influence from the 1950s. Sport quickly became staple television programming, in turn affecting the way sports operated and the benefits between sport and television

¹³⁵ Nelsson, *On the Roof of the World*, 1668.

¹³⁶ Expedition summary ‘The Manchester Himalayan Expedition in Association with the Rucksack Club’, 1957, AC, Don Whillans Box Ref 1 “Expeditions: 1957 Masherbrum folder”, 1922/P48.

¹³⁷ ‘Sydney Wignall – Obituary’, *The Daily Telegraph*, April 26, 2012.

¹³⁸ Bonington, *I Chose to Climb*, 113.

were reciprocal. Garry Whannel is amongst those to identify the critical influence of television on sport, explaining in the early 1990s how it “in association with sponsorship, has been responsible for changing the face of sport in the last 25 years”, going on to chart the relationship between this form of media and various sporting activities.¹³⁹

Climbing was amongst the early sports covered, commencing in the 1960s on the BBC and ITV. Harnessing this new medium and the public interest in major sporting events, broadcasters showed several different events over the early to mid-1960s, influenced by similar developments on the continent.¹⁴⁰ The best known of these was a multi-team ascent of the Old Man of Hoy in the summer of 1967.¹⁴¹ Just as in popular mainstream sports, television was important in shaping the perception and identity of climbing just as has been recognised in other niche sports such as skateboarding,¹⁴² and for the likes of surfer Ken Bradshaw.¹⁴³ Gilchrist's in depth article on televised climbing has explained how the BBC's *Grandstand*, and ITV's *World of Sport* showed a series of climbs featuring many of the elite climbers such as Brown, Whillans, Ian McNaught-Davis and Pete Crew, for which there was a “clear public appetite”.¹⁴⁴

As well as the public demand, television executives were also keen on the concept. Writing to Don Whillans after a 1963 climb, one producer explained how “All the ‘higher-ups’ here in London were delighted with the programme, and, as near as we can gather, the public liked it very much too. Already there is talk of doing another one”.¹⁴⁵ Clearly these programmes offered the climbers not only an opportunity to raise their profile but also increase their earnings. For instance, Whillans was offered

¹³⁹ Garry Whannel, *Fields in Vision: Television Sport and Cultural Transformation*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 2.

¹⁴⁰ Marwick, *British Society*, 246.

¹⁴¹ Paul Gilchrist, ‘Reality TV on the Rock Face - Climbing the Old Man of Hoy’, *Sport in History* 27, no. 1 (2007), 47-8.

¹⁴² Sean Dinces, ‘“Flexible Opposition”: Skateboarding Subcultures Under the Rubric of Late Capitalism’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 11 (2011), 1516.

¹⁴³ Andy Martin, *Stealing the Wave*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2008).

¹⁴⁴ Gilchrist, ‘Reality TV’, 50.

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Max Morgan-Witts to Don Whillans, October 17, 1963, AC, Don Whillans Box 14, “Files”, 1922/P48.

a fee of £75 plus daily allowances for a proposed televised climb on Clogwyn in 1963.¹⁴⁶ Three years later, he was offered £7 per day for a potential Eiger television programme.¹⁴⁷ These were perhaps irregular and relatively small sums, but compared favourably with weekly earnings from more traditional ‘professions’. Even in 1971, Perkins has shown how doctors, lawyers and academics might earn £58 per week, whilst school teachers would earn in the region of £30 per week.¹⁴⁸

Televising the sport demonstrated its earning potential even if not all of the climbers involved wished to raise their public profile. The Scot, Tom Patey (1932 - 1970), one of the climbers on the Old Man of Hoy, regular commentator and general practitioner by profession, remarked in a part-satirical piece how “Nobody is going to carry the banner for Telly climbing, but one has to admit that the rewards – although hardly spiritual, mystical, aesthetical or even ethical - are quite substantial”.¹⁴⁹ Certainly television shows such as this provided a potential opportunity for an individual to become a celebrity, or capitalise on this if they were already well-known, a potential that now existed across many sports as broadcasting and commercial sport became so intrinsically connected.¹⁵⁰

Television was especially important in exposing the sport to wider audiences given how it could create a “new common culture”.¹⁵¹ Televised climbs were important in the 1960s but the longer-term future for this form of televised climbing was less certain. Towards the end of the 1960s there were some efforts to continue with the format, but it was on the wane, and climbing broadcasting would be

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Alan Chivers (BBC) to Don Whillans, August 30, 1963, AC, Don Whillans Box 14, “Files”, 1922/P48.

¹⁴⁷ Letter from editor of Weekend Telegraph to Don Whillans, June 29, 1966, AC, Don Whillans Box 14, “Files”, 1922/P48. This was possibly the same climb mooted by Bonington which ended up not taking place. See Chris Bonington, *The Next Horizon in Boundless Horizons: The Autobiography of Chris Bonington*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000), 225.

¹⁴⁸ Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 460-1.

¹⁴⁹ Tom Patey, ‘The Professionals’, *Mountain* 4 (1969), 27.

¹⁵⁰ Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 315; Tony Collins, *Sport in Capitalist Society*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 114-118.

¹⁵¹ Sandbrook, *White Heat*, 791.

replaced by expedition documentaries of the 1970s.¹⁵² In a *Crags* article on television coverage of climbing, John Stevenson noted that the 1960s spectaculars were "the only climbing programmes which have really had the impact to make non-climbers remember them", and what followed was very limited.¹⁵³ Stevenson also asserted that the events brought climbing to life for many in wider society. It is unlikely that there were millions of genuinely enthusiastic mountaineering fans or participants, but placing events such as Old Man of Hoy on television brought in a new audience, and the scope of the audience was large given that in 1961, an estimated 75% of homes had a set, rising to 91% in the early 1970s.¹⁵⁴ This meant that the potential for people to view this new, unfamiliar sport was considerable, and it is interesting to note how much effort was put onto high quality climbing television.

The exposure of being involved in televised climbing not only improved a climber's name recognition, but also encouraged viewers to identify with them.¹⁵⁵ The same had been seen in other sports too. Russell has noted how television brought football into "a national framework and culture", and that the 1953 FA Cup final, with Stanley Matthews at its heart, demonstrated that "so many, even those who were not close followers of the sport, experienced the novelty of watching a national hero win an honour which had previously eluded him... gave the sport in general an enhanced status".¹⁵⁶ Like football coverage, the climbing events to some extent became a "genuinely shared and national event".¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Brown, *The Hard Years*, 243-248.

¹⁵³ John Stevenson, 'In Search of New Summits', *Crags* 22, (1980), 28.

¹⁵⁴ Marwick, *British Society*, 117.

¹⁵⁵ Langman has explained how "relationships and imagined interactions with characters and images [could lead] to identifications with them". Lauren Langman, 'Neon Cages: Shopping for Subjectivity', in Rob Shields, ed., *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 57.

¹⁵⁶ Dave Russell, *Football and the English: A Social History of Association Football in England, 1863-1995*, (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1997), 139; Russell is also cited in Johnes and Mellor, 'The 1953 FA Cup Final', 264.

¹⁵⁷ Johnes and Mellor, 'The 1953 FA Cup Final', 270.

Hopeful climbers who were beginning to see their own name as a brand which they could begin to monetise recognised the significance of this, particularly if, like Whillans, they intended to use their name to endorse products. Whilst a close association between individuals and equipment manufacturers did not appear to be widespread in the 1950s and early 1960s, product endorsement and royalties were a potential avenue where a few elite climbers could gain from their connections with a product. Personal endorsement was emerging immediately following the 1953 Everest success. A broadsheet-sized 32-page Everest supplement produced by *The Times* told the full story of the ascent through contributions from the climbers and correspondents. Adverts were placed throughout the paper including some half-page materials from the likes of Kodak, Primus and numerous food producers including Oxo and Huntley & Palmers. Many of these adverts point out that their goods were used on the expedition, but a small number are more prominent for including quotes from the expedition members, specifically from expedition leader John Hunt. Most noteworthy is the extensive multi-paragraph endorsement Hunt gave to Rolex – the first advert to be found in the supplement. In it he states:

The Rolex Oyster Perpetual watches, with which members of the British team were equipped, again proved their dependability on Everest. We were delighted that they kept such accurate time... As I have emphasized before, this expedition was built on the experience and achievement of others. Rolex Oyster watches have accompanied many previous pioneering expeditions. On this expedition, too, they performed splendidly, and we have indeed come to look upon Rolex Oysters as an important part of high climbing equipment.¹⁵⁸

Hunt was quoted elsewhere, in an indication that some brands felt that an affinity or endorsement with a specific climber as well as the expedition as a whole was of real value.

¹⁵⁸ 'The First Ascent of Mount Everest Supplement', *The Times*, July 1953.

From the 1960s Don Whillans began to benefit from a similar opportunity, portraying himself as a “Technical Adviser on Climbing Equipment to Thomas Black & Sons, Port Glasgow”.¹⁵⁹ He was involved in designing mountaineering equipment including a sit harness and sleeping arrangement known as the ‘Whillans Box’, recognised as being of “key importance in his move into high altitude climbing in the Himalayas in the 1960s”.¹⁶⁰ This importance was not only from a technical development perspective by producing equipment for expeditions, but also in terms of Whillans’ own reputation as a leading climber.

The harness was later manufactured and widely sold by Troll who used Whillans’ name to good effect even several years later. In one brochure, a listing for the harness explained “Originally designed for the successful Annapurna South Face Expedition, this product has been developed by Don Whillans, in conjunction with Troll, for the safest and most versatile harness to date, suitable for every aspect of climbing”.¹⁶¹ Exchanges between Whillans and Troll made clear that even towards the middle of the 1980s Whillans was receiving royalties relating to the product, but also making a contribution to advertising costs.¹⁶² In an effort to improve advertising and a reflection of the high reputation and regard in which he was still held, Troll requested “a supply of high quality posters depicting the harness being worn by him during a major expedition” and that “sales would also benefit tremendously from a personal visit by Don Whillans to major customers or exhibitions”.¹⁶³ Whillans benefited too in the form of reputation, royalties and awareness. It was therefore a mutually advantageous relationship based on Whillans’ entrepreneurial skill in developing a new product and for the companies to

¹⁵⁹ Undated letter with directions, AC, Don Whillans Box Ref 1, “Trivor Expedition: 1960 folder”, 1922/P48.

¹⁶⁰ Mary Rose, Terry Love and Mike Parsons, ‘Cotton Spinning to Climbing Gear: Practical Aspects of Design Evolution in Lancashire and the North West of England’, Lancaster University Management School working paper, (2006), 21.

¹⁶¹ ‘The Whillans Sit Harness’ brochure, undated, AC, Don Whillans Box 11, “Don Whillans: Troll”, 1922/P48.

¹⁶² Letter from Robert Holland-Ford to Tony Howard (Troll), March 25, 1983, AC, Don Whillans Box 11 Don Whillans: Troll, 1922/P48.

¹⁶³ Letter from Tony Howard to Robert Holland-Ford, August 10, 1977, AC, Don Whillans Box 11 Don Whillans: Troll, 1922/P48.

recognise how Whillans' personal 'brand' could be used to raise appeal. This cross over was applied to good effect in other adventure sports too – Stacey Paltera, for instance, in skateboarding.¹⁶⁴

Like Joe Brown, Don Whillans had demonstrated within a few post-1953 years how mountaineering could raise an income. Taking a diverse set of opportunities, Whillans built on his early profile to earn. Like others, he did a little guiding which would have supplemented his earnings from lectures and television appearances.¹⁶⁵ That he could also generate small scale sponsorship for some of his climbs was also important in demonstrating his wide appeal prior to the 1970s. As a main representative of the new modern face of mountaineering, the experiences of Whillans and Brown were a clear sign of the changing sport, and for Whillans these were formative years in a career that would see him at centre stage in the 1970s.

The experiences of Brown and Whillans were at the heart of the new meritocratic approach to mountaineering. The challenges they faced in establishing themselves as elite climbers were considerable given the traditional backbone of the sport, yet their efforts helped to break it from its amateur grip, carry it increasingly into the mainstream, and begin to align it with commercial interests. In Whillans' 1985 obituary in *The Times*, he was described not only by his climbing achievements, but also "his projection of climbing as a sport not confined to an elite" and his experiences during this era demonstrated some of the most significant changes in the sport during the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁶⁶

Chris Bonington

Chris Bonington has become Britain's best known mountaineer based on an interest in climbing and then mountaineering that began in his childhood. Born in 1934 and trained as an Army officer, Bonington explored other career options before setting out, intentionally, to become a professional mountaineer and, for a time, adventure photographer. Though his rise to prominence would take

¹⁶⁴ Dinces, 'Flexible Opposition', 1520.

¹⁶⁵ Perrin, *The Villain*, 249; Jane Last, 'ISM', *High 52* (1987), 51-53.

¹⁶⁶ 'Obituary: Don Whillans: Innovative British Mountaineer', *The Times*, August 7, 1985.

shape in the 1970s, Bonington's entrepreneurial style was developed in the 1960s and it helped him to appreciate how he could forge a career from the sport. His efforts also helped to re-establish strong links between the press and the sport.

Thanks to its grand appearance and fearsome reputation, the north face of the Eiger was a massive prize for whichever Briton could climb it, not only as a mountaineering achievement, but also for the fame it could bring. First climbed by a German-Austrian group in 1938, the face had not had a British ascent by the early 1960s. Several British groups had attempted the climb in the years before 1961, when Chris Bonington would make his first attempt on the mountain with Whillans. Efforts on the Eiger were big news back at home, and Bonington recognised the important role of the media in effectively projecting the sport to a wider audience. Although Bonington had been on other notable climbs including an expedition to Annapurna II and major routes in the Alps, the Eiger was to be the scene of his first big break that helped him to develop a strong reputation.¹⁶⁷ The climb was important for Whillans too, whom Willis has noted needed a high-profile success to boost his own lecturing opportunities.¹⁶⁸ Thanks to their publicity efforts the start of the climb in September 1961 was major news.¹⁶⁹

Bonington later explained how he had "realised the potential value of the story of the first British ascent and intended to make the most of it". He confessed that this sounded

Rather like doing the climb for money, something that leaves a slightly unpleasant taste in the mouth, particularly in mountaineering circles. But I was happy in my own mind that I wanted to do the climb for its own sake; if I could make sufficient money out of it... to retain my freedom to climb, then so much the better.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ For instance, on Annapurna II. Captain R. H. Grant, *Annapurna II*, (London: William Kimber & Co Ltd, 1961).

¹⁶⁸ Clint Willis, *The Boys of Everest*, London: Portico, 2006), 41-2.

¹⁶⁹ 'Britons Join Eiger Climb', *Daily Express*, September 2, 1961.

¹⁷⁰ Bonington, *Boundless Horizons*, 148-9.

Seeking 'freedom' was an important motivation for Bonington as he strove not necessarily to earn a maximum income, but simply to continue to live as a mountaineer. Although climbing in the Alps would not carry the same costs as Himalayan climbing, one needed to make ends meet and what Bonington pursued was an economically viable way to achieve this in parallel with undertaking his chosen pursuit; to explicitly make mountaineering both work and leisure. This was in keeping with wider aspirations for freedom and personal choice increasingly prevalent in the 1960s.

The Eiger story seemed to play well to the public, particularly when depicted with an element of romance through sensational headlines such as "A kiss before the Eiger" relating to Bonington's relationship.¹⁷¹ Headlines such as this were a sign of the media's interest in people and gossip that Holt has noted became particularly important in newspapers once television emerged as a new form of media competition.¹⁷² For Bonington, such stories made him better known and placed him at the centre of the sport's increasingly public image. Although Whillans was less overt in seeking the limelight he seemed to be happy to some extent to maximise his potential income. According to Bonington:

'They all seem to want to get a story for nothing,' observed Don. 'I wonder how much they make out of it.' 'I don't see why we shouldn't make something out of it ourselves. If we get up let's sell a story to the highest bidder. The papers will make a story up even if we don't tell them anything - and God knows we need the money.'¹⁷³

The 1961 efforts ended unsuccessfully with the face in dangerous condition, but Whillans and Bonington returned the following year to attempt the face again, and this time they sought not only

¹⁷¹ Bonington, *I Chose to Climb*, 144.

¹⁷² Holt, *Sport and the British*, 316.

¹⁷³ Bonington, *Boundless Horizons*, 128.

newspaper coverage, but also financial backing. The new climb therefore relied on both publicity and sponsorship.

As had been the case for the Everest expeditions a decade earlier the national newspapers were interested in covering the story and paying to do so. Before they set off, Bonington and Whillans successfully sold the story of their forthcoming effort to the *Daily Express*, with a staggered contract of payment by results, offering £60 paid up front, £300 if “we are the first Britons to climb the North face of the Eiger in Switzerland in 1962” or £150 if they got above the Flat Iron feature on the face.¹⁷⁴ In exchange, they gave the *Daily Express* the “exclusive story of our preparations to climb, our attempt to climb and the events following our attempt”, including their photographs. The climber’s aspect of the contract went on:

We further agree to make no statement and to give no interviews, photographs... nor to lend any photographs or documents to a representative of any film, television, or radio corporation... until after the Daily Express has completed publication of all it requires of the above story.¹⁷⁵

The use of such newspaper contracts was not new. Indeed, it was not new for the *Daily Express*, who had previously part backed an international all-female expedition to Cho Oyo in 1959 alongside *Paris-Match* magazine.¹⁷⁶ Osborne has reported how the 1920s Everest expeditions included such contracts,¹⁷⁷ though they had become something of a bind in 1953 where they were used for the expedition team and the organising Himalayan Committee.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Contract between the *Daily Express* and Don Whillans and Chris Bonington dated July 9, 1962, AC, Don Whillans Box 14, “Files”, 1922/P48.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Katherine Brickell and Bradley L Garrett, ‘Geography, Film and Exploration: Women and Amateur Filmmaking in the Himalayas’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38 (2013), 9.

¹⁷⁷ Osborne, ‘Gender and the Organisation of British Climbing’, 329-331.

¹⁷⁸ Conefrey, *Everest 1953*, 106.

On this occasion the funds were not required to get the expedition off the ground. Instead, these funds would be an income for Whillans and Bonington to enable them to continue pursuing their lifestyle. There was a degree of naivety from the climbers in dealing with the paper however, as Bonington later acknowledged, “I sold the Eiger story to the *Daily Express*. They gave it the treatment. I felt it was cheap sensationalism and now I’m very careful with reporters. Then we were like babes in arms”.¹⁷⁹

In their attempt to make the climb in 1962 Bonington and Whillans came across an accident involving another pair of British climbers, one of whom had died. Turning from their summit attempt, the pair helped the surviving climber, Brian Nally, down the face. This event alone garnered considerable media interest including a later interview with Nally by the *Daily Express*, likely looking to capitalise on their investment.¹⁸⁰ Curiously, upon describing the accident and rescue, Nally is quoted as calling Whillans and Bonington “our climbing rivals”.¹⁸¹ In his biography of Whillans, Jim Perrin notes how Nally was cast in the “disempowering role of helpless and hapless victim” whilst favourable coverage was given to Bonington and Whillans.¹⁸² However, Whillans felt some resentment towards the reporting of the rescue effort. As Bonington recalled, Whillans said “‘I’ve had enough of the Eiger for this season’... ‘All this publicity and money-grabbing is enough to make anyone sick” after which the pair went to climb near Innsbruck, in the process demonstrating how escapism is an important motivation for climbers.¹⁸³

Whillans returned home shortly after, ironically to run a lecture, though Bonington had not given up on his ambition.¹⁸⁴ He teamed up with Ian Clough to try the face once more. With a spell of good

¹⁷⁹ Carol Dix, ‘The Social Climber’, originally published in *The Guardian* March 10, 1973, reprinted in Nelsson, *On the Roof of the World*, 2760.

¹⁸⁰ ‘I Hate It, Says Climber, But I Must Go On’, *Daily Express*, July 26, 1962.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Perrin, *The Villain*, 227.

¹⁸³ Bonington, *I Chose to Climb*, 157.

¹⁸⁴ Bonington, *The Next Horizon*, 211.

weather, the two successfully climbed the route and very quickly were thrust into the public limelight. Bonington was quick to capitalise, realising the extensive coverage and publicity that the climb would raise, and the effect it could have on his personal profile. The front-page of the *Daily Express*, on September 1, 1962 proudly exclaimed “At last – on top”. The paper featured an extensive article across pages one and two, and the article writer’s name, Bonington, featuring in a font size almost as large as the headline itself.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, on the front page Bonington’s name appears five times (see Figure 2 overleaf), as well as the words and photograph being his. The article explains how good they felt, how swift the ascent was, but also the deep shock of hearing of the death of two other Britons on the wall, including Tom Carruthers.

Maximising the story further, other Bonington articles appeared in the newspaper over the following week chronicling the story under headlines such as “How I got to the top of the Eiger”,¹⁸⁶ and “At 2 o’clock... the final triumph!”.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Chris Bonington, ‘At Last – On Top’, *Daily Express*, September 1, 1962.

¹⁸⁶ Chris Bonington, ‘How I Got to the Top of the Eiger’, *Daily Express*, September 4, 1962.

¹⁸⁷ Chris Bonington, ‘At 2 o’clock... The Final Triumph!’, *Daily Express*, September 6, 1962.



Journey into the Land of Secret Eyes

The Daily Express is the newspaper that brings you adventure!



RENE MacCOLL
reports from Ulan Bator, capital of the Mongolian People's Republic... Friday

RUSSIA has won a great victory in Mongolia, as the expense of her age-old adversary in these strategically vital Asiatic borderlands—China.

The Russians have achieved an almost complete take-over in this weirdly beautiful 600,000-square-mile country containing 1,000,000 nomadic herdsmen.

Back in the twenties, the secretaries of those countries, under the inspired leadership of the great Genghis Khan, swept victoriously all the way to the banks of the Indus.

I have just completed two weeks of arduous travel in Mongolia—1,200 miles by jumping dog and bountiful tea.

One night I would be sleeping under a tent in the Gobi Desert, 500 miles from the Chinese border, in 30-degree heat. Twenty-four hours later I was studying in mountainous 4,000ft. high.

The Russian victory was everywhere in the north-western Gobi. Russia has no troops in Mongolia. There is no need for that.

Uranium found

The 10th Russian century, with its new-found confidence and energy, spread out in the Gobi Desert, in Mongolia's Gobi-Altai.

Mongolia has a long list of interesting natural wealth in its vast, open, and fertile land, from uranium to copper, from diamonds to tin.

There is a huge deposit of the coal, oil, and natural gas near Ulan Bator.

But the big news, which I am now able to report, is that a fantastically rich uranium deposit has been discovered in the north-west part of the country.

And as I write this dispatch, a team of top Russian experts is heading for the mine.

Uranium, which is one of China's most important resources, is being mined in the Gobi Desert, in Mongolia's Gobi-Altai.

The first signs of uranium and other minerals were discovered in the Gobi Desert, in Mongolia's Gobi-Altai.

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Britons beat killer Eiger

CHRIS BONINGTON and Ian Clough conquered the killer North Wall of the Eiger yesterday—the first Britons to do so. Even while they climbed the

sheer 6,000ft. face of rock and ice, two men fell to death below them, making a toll of 25 since man first tried to conquer this Alpine peak in 1935.

AT LAST-ON TOP

By Chris Bonington © SCARBOROUGH NEWSPAPERS 1962
AND PICTURE HE TOOK OF EIGER COLLEAGUE



DISOULACED near the summit Ian Clough makes camp—and is photographed by Chris Bonington

THE LAST STEPS TO SUCCESS



Almost there—Bonington

POCKET CARTOON BY GURNEY LANCHESTER



POCKET CARTOON BY GURNEY LANCHESTER

Chris Bonington phoned this from Klein Scheidegg at midnight

WE were so exhilarated as we clambered our way up the last ice face to the summit of the Eiger that we almost got up and ran.

When we reached the summit, the first of our three-day climb left us.

We sat on the snow and slung our bags. Ian Clough, who had been climbing since the first day, was the first to sit down.

FRESH As the last of our three-day climb left us, we were fresh and full of energy.

At last, we had reached the summit of the Eiger. It was a great achievement.

AMBITION Chris Bonington had the ambition to be the first Briton to climb the North Wall of Eiger.

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Amateur bomb rocks synagogue

Express Staff Reporter

A HOME-MADE bomb exploded at a London synagogue last night after a service attended by 200 people.

The Adolph Joseph Synagogue in Gower Street, London, was hit by a bomb which exploded at 11.15 p.m.

The bomb was made of wood and filled with a mixture of petrol and dynamite.

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Record August for the Express

Express Staff Reporter

THE DAILY EXPRESS has reached its record peak of success.

The daily net sale in August was 4,358,000.

THE HIGHEST

AUGUST

SALE

in the history of the newspaper.

And it was more than 20,000 up on the July daily sale.

U.S. plane fired on

Express Staff Reporter

TWO U.S. Navy F-4 Phantom II fighters were fired on by North Vietnamese fighters over North Vietnam last night.

The two F-4s were on a mission to drop bombs on a North Vietnamese target area.

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Airline stops Avro flights

Express Staff Reporter

THE AVRO airline has been suspended by the Civil Aviation Authority.

The suspension is due to safety concerns over the airline's operations.

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Although the reaction in the *Daily Express* was extensive, it was not alone. The *Daily Mirror* also led with the story after the mountain had been climbed under the headline “Two Britons Conquer Killer Mountain”, and whilst it explained the climb and death of Carruthers, Bonington’s name was less prominent than the *Express* with more of an emphasis on the dangers of the mountain and the lives it had claimed.¹⁸⁸ Reaction was more modest in other newspapers. *The Times* noted that they made the ascent very quickly and cited locals as saying they were “among the best”.¹⁸⁹ With such extensive reporting and detailed coverage in the *Daily Express* it is clear that the ascent was important news even if Bonington was surprised at the “fuss it was going to create”.¹⁹⁰ The way the event was reported and some of the headlines used hinted at the memory of success on Everest just nine years earlier and the invented tradition it had formed. Further, it shows the similarities Sandbrook has observed more generally in that “Although the sixties is often seen as a period of utopian optimism, the culture of the time... was suffused with a powerful sense of nostalgia”.¹⁹¹

Such mainstream press coverage was a continuation of pre-1953 habits, though changes in the mediascape during this era were significant. As referred to earlier, television had become a revolutionary new form of media and mountaineering was connected to this at an early date. Additionally, new types of mountaineering magazine became important in reporting news and as a voice for the grassroots community. New magazines, most notably *Mountain* and, slightly later, *Crags* were taking shape from the 1960s. In some ways these publications were the epitome of new commercialisation thanks to their reliance on advertising, payment of climbers for pictures and stories and, in the case of *Mountain*, shifting the focus of the growing grassroots community on to elite climbing. It is logical that Potter places the development of these magazines at the centre of his commercial discussions, though the mainstream media and corporate entities were also significant,

¹⁸⁸ ‘Two Britons Conquer Killer Mountain’, *Daily Mirror*, September 1, 1962.

¹⁸⁹ ‘First Britons Climb Eiger North Wall’, *The Times*, September 1, 1962.

¹⁹⁰ Jim Perrin, ‘Bonington at 50’, *High* (August 1985), 32.

¹⁹¹ Sandbrook, *White Heat*, 792.

and the changes witnessed in this area in the late 1960s and early 1970s were one of the major signs that commercialisation was no longer frowned upon.¹⁹²

New climbing magazines were both a reflection of and enabler for greater commercial activity. However, their use of imagery in particular was opposite to its earlier application. Colley has explained how in the nineteenth-century new photography of the mountain landscape was used to encourage awe and recognition of mountainous landscapes and that photographs showed that “sublime did not have to remain sunk among the everyday machinery of commerce and stagecraft”.¹⁹³ But in the 1960s photography was being used by magazines for the opposite reason, putting climber front and centre, and earning them a reputation and potentially an income at the same time and an early signal of later individualisation.¹⁹⁴

The importance of greater coverage through such differing mediums should not be underestimated. Climbers were more aware of what they needed to do, as illustrated by the sales pitches employed by climbers such as Bonington and, as we shall see shortly, Dougal Haston, as well as the prominence of the mountains they chose to climb. As Porter has recognised more widely, “There was generally more awareness of the need to make the sports product attractive” and this was how it was being achieved in mountaineering.¹⁹⁵ In some ways this was not dissimilar from other economic decisions being made elsewhere in Britain such as the growing commercial imperatives and business links that universities sought in the 1960s and 1970s to become more business minded and financially astute.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² As he noted, the expansion of magazines increased public attention and so “companies became aware of this interest and began to exploit it with product placements and advertising campaigns”. David Potter, ‘British Exploratory Mountaineering in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century’ (PhD Thesis, Nottingham University, 2007), 291.

¹⁹³ Ann C. Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 100.

¹⁹⁴ Joseph E. Taylor III, ‘On Climber, Granite, Sky’, *Environmental History* 11, no. 1 (2006), 130-5.

¹⁹⁵ Porter, ‘More Than a Game’, 130.

¹⁹⁶ Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, 359.

Gilchrist and Wheaton have identified how development in media technologies impacted on professional opportunity in lifestyle sports, and Ronald Clark did the same for mountaineering specifically.¹⁹⁷ As Clark noted "more than money was added: the star mountaineer had become the rugged equivalent of the pre-war matinee idol, bringing to armchair viewers the proxy thrill of not falling off".¹⁹⁸ For the new consumer who read or viewed mountaineering news, the accessible coverage of the sport gave them insights that were rarely available before, and cast climbers in a particular light. The benefit it brought was a broader platform, widespread coverage of them and their sport, and the chance to make a name for themselves which could only encourage manufacturers and retailers such as Pindisports in recognising value through association with them.

The Eiger climb led Bonington to "write a book and [gave] him a tale to lecture about. Suddenly it gave him an income from climbing".¹⁹⁹ It was a necessary step in raising his profile and that of climbing more widely in Britain. As he later remarked:

Really it was a case of grasping an opportunity because it happened to be there, with no clear picture of where it was going to lead. I slipped into it as the lesser of available evils and have been doing it ever since.²⁰⁰

To maintain momentum, just weeks after the Eiger climb Bonington declared his intention to climb in Patagonia, this announcement also being reported.²⁰¹ However, Bonington was irked by some of the *Daily Express*' reporting of the Eiger climb, and so when he embarked on this next expedition he was himself the correspondent giving him the opportunity to report in a manner he felt more

¹⁹⁷ Paul Gilchrist and Belinda Wheaton, 'New Media Technologies in Lifestyle Sport', in Brett Hutchins and David Rowe, eds., *Digital Media Sport: Technology, Power and Culture in the Network Society*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 169-185.

¹⁹⁸ Ronald Clark, *Men, Myths and Mountains*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1976), 269.

¹⁹⁹ Richard Woods, 'Climber's Top Priorities', *The Sunday Times*, November 13, 1994.

²⁰⁰ Perrin, 'Bonington at 50', 32.

²⁰¹ 'Eiger Conquerors Aim at Peak in Patagonia', *Daily Express*, September 20, 1962.

appropriate.²⁰² He was conscious of being both reliant on the media, but potentially at the mercy of it. He later confided to his mother his fear that his first book, *I Chose to Climb*, “just hasn’t got popular or controversial appeal (sic)”.²⁰³ In other words, to keep the public interested, perhaps some sensationalisation or good story telling would be necessary, but he wanted to respect the sport and discourage the gaudy stories told by some.

Bonington later remarked that 1962 was the first time he started to earn a living from mountaineering.²⁰⁴ Success on the Eiger had been the trigger, but an element of luck was certainly involved in being on the mountain at the right time and being first to succeed despite many Britons attempting the climb around the same time. Speaking about Brian Nally, Perrin explains how had he and his climbing partner Barry Brewster summited, the “ambitious” Nally “would have developed into one of the leading figures of his generation”,²⁰⁵ particularly as such a summit would have been added to his first British ascent of the Matterhorn’s north face.²⁰⁶ Bonington himself would later point to the importance of the Eiger success, telling Ken Wilson that “I suppose doing the Eiger was the key to everything that followed” highlighting just how important such a major climb could be.²⁰⁷ Other ambitious climbers also saw the opportunity of success on the Eiger if they could be first.

The outcome of expeditions, success or failure, disaster or tragedy, were vital for successful commodification of mountaineering by climbers. Either way, for Bonington, potential exploitation of danger and risk was an important feature. Hence, the Eiger with its tragic history was an ideal climb to capitalise on. However, one story alone would not suffice. Reflecting how much the effort to build on his opportunities consumed him, whilst away climbing in 1966 he was still thinking about earning

²⁰² Bonington, *The Next Horizon*, 194.

²⁰³ Letter from Chris Bonington Helen Bonington, September 7, 1966, MHT, CBO/04/01/03.

²⁰⁴ Dix, ‘The Social Climber’, 2759.

²⁰⁵ Perrin, *The Villain*, 226-7.

²⁰⁶ ‘Climbers of North Walls’, *The Times*, August 13, 1966.

²⁰⁷ Ken Wilson, ‘Christian Bonington’, *Mountain Craft* 79 (1968), 12.

from his exploits. He called his wife in mid-1966 passing lecture details, who would pass them on to his mother who had been arranging lectures for him. It occurred to him that it would be worthwhile getting the “names of all the Public Schools... to send lecture leaflets to”.²⁰⁸ Not long afterwards he had a full lecture programme creating a decent income with “one, sometimes two lectures a day for a solid three months”.²⁰⁹ He was no longer restricted to lecturing on the Eiger alone. By that autumn a flyer showed that Bonington offered three separate lectures – “Eiger Direct”, “Volcano” and “Cordillera Blanca” – and his mother acted as booking agent and organiser for such events.²¹⁰ Mindful of needing to sustain a public image and tales to write and speak about, following another climb in 1967 he explained to his mother that it was difficult but “I think I’ve got a good story out of it”.²¹¹

In contrast to Bonington’s pursuit of the limelight, Clough deliberately fell into the background after climbing the Eiger. Representing one of the overriding features of the transformation of mountaineering, the fact that Clough was not inclined to sell his version of events was important and demonstrated that one had to *want* the publicity and public image. He was, though, prepared to postpone his teaching career to embark on the subsequent Patagonian trip.²¹² Bonington later noted how Clough “was a person to whom material gain meant very little”, and this perhaps explains why he chose not to follow Bonington’s example despite the seemingly extensive opportunities available from success on the Eiger.²¹³

These areas of media interest and income were supplemented towards the end of the 1960s as Bonington became a technical adviser for a retailer, essentially enabling them to use his name in advertising and for raising awareness. The retailer was Pindisports, by no means a small outfit for their

²⁰⁸ Letter from Wendy Bonington to Helen Bonington June 1, 1966, MHT, CBO/04/01/03.

²⁰⁹ Letter from Chris Bonington to Helen Bonington, July 24, 1966, MHT, CBO/04/01/03.

²¹⁰ ‘Three New Lectures. Autumn 1966 By Christian Bonington’ flyer, MHT, CBO/04/01/03.

²¹¹ Letter from Chris Bonington to Helen Bonington postmark dated May 25, 1967, MHT, CBO/04/01/03.

²¹² ‘Eiger Conquerors Aim at Peak in Patagonia’, *Daily Express*, September 20, 1962.

²¹³ Chris Bonington, *Annapurna South Face*, (London: Cassell, 1972), 8.

catalogues had a publication run of 12,000.²¹⁴ A proud advert in *Mountain Craft* in 1968 proclaimed that “Pindisports are pleased to announce Chris Bonington as their technical adviser at the new mountain shop”.²¹⁵ As with Brown, product endorsements demonstrated the strength of an individual’s appeal, and were not possible for all aspiring career climbers. For those who did prove sufficiently attractive though, they were part of the portfolio of means through which earnings could be generated.

In a letter to his mother Bonington noted the importance of widespread coverage. He explained, following success on the Eiger that:

I’ve been quite prolific this last week, a lead article in the *Express* early on and I’ve got another lead article in the *Sunday Telegraph* on Sunday – should have a picture in the *Daily Mail* on Monday.²¹⁶

However, this came at a cost. It is clear that some aspects of his efforts with the media and developing a personal brand were challenging. Bonington remarked years later that “I find the writing desperately hard... it’s nothing compared to climbing, but it’s an important adjunct... My living is to be a communicator and I can therefore enjoy my climbing to the full and then the work is sitting down writing about it”.²¹⁷ This was at the crux of the change in this era. It was no longer a pursuit for personal gratification and achievement alone. Climbing was becoming work. Like Brown who perhaps reluctantly lectured to earn an income, and Whillans who returned from an opportunity on the Eiger to meet lecturing commitments, Bonington was also demonstrating that in order to sustain such a lifecycle, and potentially to carve out a career, considerable effort was required to translate experiences into something with sufficient appeal. Despite this, Bonington’s experiences in the 1960s

²¹⁴ Letter from Chris Bonington to Dougal Haston, December 11, 1968, MHT, CBO/04/03/01b.

²¹⁵ See advert in *Mountain Craft* 79 (1968), 16.

²¹⁶ Letter from Chris Bonington to Helen Bonington, August 27, 1966, MHT, CBO/04/01/03.

²¹⁷ Jim Curran and John Porter, ‘Bonington: The Mountain Interview’, *Mountain* 130 (1989), 33.

demonstrated the importance of a major achievement that he could capitalise on in numerous ways often harnessing the changing media, features that would remain for him for decades to come.

Dougal Haston

Born near Edinburgh in 1940, Dougal Haston became well known for his Scottish climbing during his twenties. He rose to prominence following his climbs alongside Robin Smith, and his abilities set him in good stead to make a major contribution to British mountaineering in the decades that followed.²¹⁸

With Brown already finding success as a career climber thanks to his varied portfolio of earning opportunities, and Bonington beginning to take publicity and reporting of mountaineering into the mainstream, Haston pursued a mixed approach to commercialising and capitalising on different aspects of the sport in order to benefit financially. This assortment included testing whether there was further capacity to use popular media, as well as acting as a guide.

Following his climbing apprenticeship in the Alps and Dolomites, Haston climbed the Eiger north face in the summer of 1963 with Rhodesian Rusty Baillie and showed how press coverage was still available despite Bonington and Clough having already taken the first British ascent spoils. Haston and Baillie were sponsored by the *Daily Mail* and there remained a great deal of interest in the climb. They succeeded in scaling the face and upon their success, “the admittedly esoteric Scottish press had a field day”.²¹⁹ This was an important achievement, though Haston looked more widely at opportunities and explored whether guiding could be one route through which he might sustain his outdoors lifestyle. In particular, he looked to make optimal use of his emerging personality as a way to make guiding more lucrative. As Connor, whose biography of Haston reveals much about the man, notes “it

²¹⁸ Smith was regarded as a highly gifted climber, who died on his first visit to the greater ranges, aged 23. Jimmy Marshall, ‘The Adventures of Wheech: The Life and Times of Robin Smith’, October 8, 2010, online <http://footlesscrow.blogspot.co.uk/2010/10/adventures-of-wheech-life-and-times-of.html> (accessed 27 September, 2017).

²¹⁹ Jeff Connor, *Dougal Haston: The Philosophy of Risk*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd, 2002), 76.

was clear that having a famous name would help future plans, and the way ahead for him was major ascents, summer and winter, on as many unknown walls as he could find".²²⁰

Such a perspective perhaps explains Haston's desire to sell sponsorship for an expedition to South America. The mountain ranges in South America were relatively unknown though there was growing interest amongst elite climbers in the destination. MEF expedition grants reflect this, with over a fifth of the value of 1966 - 1975 funds going to expeditions to South America / Antarctica, almost as great as those for expeditions to the Himalaya, and an increase on the 1954 - 1965 period.²²¹ Mountaineering journalist Peter Gillman, remembers how important Haston's sales pitch to the *Sunday Times* was for this South American expedition. Gillman recalls how Haston was taken out by the newspaper's editor

...to lunch at the Savoy where, over the mixed grill Dougal produced his masterstroke, a photograph showing Cerro Torre at its most dramatic, a thrusting granite spire capped with the overhanging ice confections that are its hallmark. The news editor saw the point at once. He formulated the six-word headline, 'The Worst Mountain in the World', soon to be shortened to the more economical version, 'The Worst Mountain', and the venture was on.²²²

The expedition was made possible with £1,500 provided by the newspaper in exchange for coverage, but it was largely thanks to Haston's profile and publicity-aware sales pitch, building on and honing skills he had already acquired.²²³

A greater statement of his ability, and of his ambition, was another climb on the Eiger in 1966. Haston and American John Harlin attempted a new route known as the 'Eiger Direct' which aimed to ascend the face in a near vertical route, and they recognised the profile and opportunity that such a climb

²²⁰ Ibid., 76.

²²¹ Ruthven, 'Changing Fashions', 147.

²²² Peter Gillman, *In Balance: Twenty Years of Mountaineering Journalism*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), 24.

²²³ Gillman, *In Balance*, 24.

would bring. It has been noted that whilst "some found the American's quest for publicity and self-aggrandisement distasteful, Haston was able to rationalise that media exposure would give him the time, money and freedom necessary".²²⁴ Even if Harlin's climbs were barely reported in his home country until after his death, his popularity and success was important in Europe.²²⁵

James Ullman was an old-school climbing commentator and this was reflected in his 1967 biography of John Harlin where he wrote "if there is one word worse than *competition* in the mountaineer's lexicon, that word is *publicity*".²²⁶ Even at the time Ullman wrote this, the climbing world was changing and publicity and commodifying pressures were not objected to in the way they had been before. The press was important in "popularising" and "sustaining interest" in sports, but just as Holt has recognised we should not consider that the press was "creating or manufacturing professional sports".²²⁷ Spectatorship was the main focus. In mountaineering the sport existed well before the press were interested, but it was important in creating conditions for financial interest to develop, evidenced by media being at the centre of sponsorship in this period. Media sponsorship would play a reduced role in the post-1969 phase, but was vital to the sport in the early post-Everest years, where even a 1954 Hillary led Barun expedition was expecting some £1,000 - £2,000 to be raised from the media.²²⁸

Because of its nature, the Eiger Direct climb was expected to take a great deal of time and was attempted in siege style whereby ropes were fixed up much of the length of the climb, adding considerably to the time and equipment required. Such a difficult, committing new route was in keeping with Bonington's characterisation of Haston as being "utterly practical and unsentimental,

²²⁴ Connor, *Philosophy of Risk*, 91.

²²⁵ James Ramsey Ullman, *Straight Up*, (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc, 1968), 170-173.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Holt, *Sport and the British*, 307-310; 318-9.

²²⁸ 'New Zealand Barun Expedition' undated, MHT, CHO/2/2.

believing in real economy of effort".²²⁹ There was media interest in the novel and dangerous climb and the *Daily Telegraph* underwrote the expedition. Again, this climb was an attractive story for the press to report on and Harlin agreed coverage ranging from £500 for starting, £1000 for reaching 'Death Bivouack', and £1,500 for reaching the summit, notably more than Bonington and Whillans had agreed a few years earlier.²³⁰ The sport was described by *The Times* as being in "mushroom growth" in 1966 so perhaps it is little surprise that this opportunity was available.²³¹ With Bonington as photographer and Gillman as journalist, interest was building. This was enhanced further thanks to a German team on the Eiger Direct at the same time which elevated the sensational competitive aspects, contributing towards some inaccurate commentary.²³² Concerns about reporting and its possible implications on image must have occurred to Harlin for he wrote to the *Telegraph* editor that "All material emanating from your writers must be edited before publishing by Chris Bonington or myself". This was aimed at reducing sensationalism, but probably also affected by him, as his biographer stated, wanting a "degree of control".²³³

Towards the end of the climb that had taken several weeks, Harlin died after his rope broke. Haston continued and reached the summit with the German group and the route was named in Harlin's honour. For Haston there was major publicity, making him internationally known and, according to Connor, "approaching something akin to pop stardom".²³⁴ The success and publicity gave him new numerous earning opportunities. In particular, Haston could capitalise on various forms of media and communications. This commenced with visibility through the considerable post-climb reporting, and

²²⁹ J. Marshall, C. J. S. Bonington and D. Scott, 'Dougal Haston - A Tribute', *Alpine Journal* 83 (1978), 136.

²³⁰ Gillman, *In Balance*, 14.

²³¹ 'Climbers of North Walls', *The Times*, August 13, 1966.

²³² For instance, Gillman explains how a report on the climb by Hugo Kuranda claimed, amongst other things, that Haston and Harlin had radioed for help. Gillman, *In Balance*, 14–15.

²³³ Ullman, *Straight Up*, 250.

²³⁴ Connor, *Philosophy of Risk*, 100.

was followed with lecturing opportunities.²³⁵ He went on to write a book about the climb with Gillman reflecting the longer-term interest in the ascent explaining how “‘It was a very obvious thing to do... The money seemed a fortune at the time’”.²³⁶ The climb was a pivotal moment for Haston and gave him the ingredients required to build his reputation further which were then capitalised on through his guiding efforts.

Although Bonington was leading in the mountain communications market he was not trying to monopolise it. Indeed, he and Haston formed a close friendship as well as business association. Following their experiences up to the mid-1960s they had created many stories that they could sell to the public in the form of books, articles and lectures, and they had some written exchanges in 1966 and 1967 where they discussed the opportunities available through collaborative working. Bonington had arranged a lecture tour in 1966 following his own recent trip to South America. As well as his standard lecture offerings, he also voiced the idea of having “the odd big [lecture]” which he hoped Haston could also present at.²³⁷ Presumably in response (for his letter is undated) Haston noted that he was “willing to throw in the obviously useful commodity of my presence” before he went on to mention “what about a grand slam tour. There’s lots of lovely money to be made”.²³⁸ It is difficult to tell whether this latter statement was a genuine proposition or a tongue-in-cheek comment for Haston did not appear to be the type entirely motivated by making money. However, the remark ought not to be dismissed out of hand, and it is informative in the amount of opportunity these leading climbers believed was available in 1966 thanks to Bonington’s rising profile and Haston’s new found fame. It also says a great deal about the demand from the public that obviously existed to hear these new stars speak.

²³⁵ Paul Gilchrist, ‘The Cultural Politics of Heroism in British Mountaineering, 1921-1995’, (PhD Thesis, University of Brighton, 2009), 184-186.

²³⁶ Connor, *Philosophy of Risk*, 103.

²³⁷ Letter from Chris Bonington to Dougal Haston, August 17, 1966, MHT, CBO/04/03/01b.

²³⁸ Letter from Dougal Haston to Chris Bonington, undated, MHT, CBO/04/03/01b.

By 1968 Bonington's increasingly savvy and dependent media links saw him use an agent, George Greenfield, to help promote his activities and sell stories and gain sponsorships. Greenfield would go on to become a central figure to the growing commercial exploitation of mountaineering in the 1970s but in the late 1960s he was involved in promoting these entrepreneurial climbers. Speaking about a future climb, Bonington felt that between himself, Greenfield and Haston they could exploit the demand for their stories, explaining how they need not be limited to British publications, but could look abroad as well. Bonington remarked that:

If we get up the Eiger I think it could be a very big story. We could perhaps use [Greenfield]... for between all of us, I think we have contacts with most of the major foreign magazines as well as the British.²³⁹

He went on to comment about how the newspapers could also be encouraged to cover such a climb. Bonington also explained to Haston how he was an adviser for Pindisports and that the firm expressed an interest in using Haston for publicity purposes too. He explained how the retailer "have asked me to approach you and see if you would be prepared to have a photograph of yourself climbing in their catalogue, listing the equipment that you use and then simply saying that all this is obtainable in Pindisports".²⁴⁰ This is clear evidence that the climbers themselves were becoming recognised individuals and brands in their own right, carrying influence and weight in the new, popular world of grassroots climbing. In return, Pindisports were prepared to advertise the International School of Mountaineering (ISM), Haston's own guiding organisation based in Leysin, in their catalogue.²⁴¹

The potential to use an expedition as a vehicle for advertisers was an important change too. Whilst Pindisports might benefit from attachment to a climber's name, if it could speak about backing a successful prominent climb there could be many advantages. In a similar vein, some expeditions

²³⁹ Letter from Chris Bonington to Dougal Haston, December 11, 1968, MHT, CBO/04/03/01b.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

approached manufacturers in the anticipation that any equipment or funds offered by them might, in return, lead to favourable coverage or product placement. For instance, prior to the departure of a 1964 expedition to the Karakorum which was to cost some £3,500, Karrimor were approached for funds or equipment and informed that:

Before the party leaves in April 1964, articles will appear in the press and several of our members will appear on television. So it may be that we can help with the advertising of your products. This of course being merely incidental but some small recompense for your interest.²⁴²

Many of the elite climbers in this era were happier to embrace commercial options, by advertising products or by arranging contracts with the press. According to Ullman, John Harlin “had no objection whatever to his feats being recorded and applauded, and believed that a valid way of raising the money needed for a big climb was through contacts with newspapers or magazines”, and whilst this may have been “sacrilege” to some, he, Haston, Bonington, Brown and others were starting to do this routinely.²⁴³ Advertising products was particularly important. Colley has explained how at the end of the nineteenth-century female climbers sometimes advertised the likes of Burberry, and this evolved by the 1960s into the naming of sporting goods after famous climbers, or the likes of Haston being asked to feature in retailer catalogues.²⁴⁴ Indeed, Pindisports were not alone, with several other retailers such as Blacks and George Fisher carrying general and specialist outdoor wear at this time with “the market for climbing and outdoor products... growing at an exceptional rate”.²⁴⁵ These opportunities were starting to become the norm, and would feature more, sometimes including – by extension – products that were not climbing-specific in the 1970s.

²⁴² Letter from D Hadlum to Karrimor Ltd, November 29, 1963, AC, Don Whillans Box 1 Ref, 1922/P48.

²⁴³ Ullman, *Straight Up*, 230.

²⁴⁴ Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains*, 140.

²⁴⁵ Rose, Love and Parsons, ‘Cotton Spinning’, 9; 16.

Evidently the climbers were considering the options of generating income from their climbs, and this was made most apparent when Bonington wrote to Haston explaining that in future expeditions regarding coverage rights “I think it makes sence (sic) to think of the exploitation at this stage, rather than leave it till later”.²⁴⁶ This attitude between the two would come back in the 1970s and influence the even more commercialised expeditions and earning opportunities. However, Haston and Bonington were the two climbers who succeeded most at this time in generating commercial interest.

Haston’s growing profile was an ideal base on which to pursue the other avenue of his mountaineering lifestyle – guiding – which also brought with it an income. Haston ran the ISM in Leysin following Harlin’s death. Harlin’s plan had been to create “a climbing school where the teachers would be top international mountaineers”, and Haston took on this project from 1966.²⁴⁷ A school such as this not only created an opportunity for climbers to earn an income in a more typical professional fashion and spend time in the mountains, but also to enhance their reputation. In his autobiography published in 1972, Haston reiterated his enthusiasm for the project, saying:

I knew it would be the struggle that all projects are in infancy. But it was something exciting within climbing, which wasn't for once in the range of direct challenge to mountain ways. I'd been climbing for so long in the insular world of the extreme that I hadn't really thought too much about passing on my skills to others. Did I really want to? On reflection the answer seemed to be yes, provided the people concerned were enthusiastic and keen to learn. I'd had so much enjoyment out of the mountains and had been the recipient of so many valuable lessons in my youth, that it would have been very narrow-minded to deny the benefit of my experience to anyone who was genuinely interested.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Letter from Chris Bonington to Dougal Haston, January 10, 1968 (this may actually be 1969), MHT, CBO/04/03/01b.

²⁴⁷ Last, ‘ISM’, 51-2.

²⁴⁸ Dougal Haston, *In High Places*, (London: Canongate Books, 2003), 92.

Reflecting the power of his reputation, he used his name to good effect to promote the school. Although earlier adverts did not feature him as much,²⁴⁹ later they would use tag lines such as “Dangle with Dougal in the Alps” (Figure 3)²⁵⁰ and “Higher with Haston in the Alps”,²⁵¹ whilst an ISM brochure included a picture of him.²⁵² As Haston’s own celebrity grew, it became clear it could be leveraged in promoting the ISM.

Haston may not, however, have been the perfect guide. Indeed, the desire for him to climb himself and for ISM to be a vehicle that allowed this, meant that “for many of his friends, however, it seemed a surprising vocation... Dougal, in any case, was far too concerned with his own mountain experience to bother much about others”.²⁵³ Instruction and teaching did not suit Haston, and in running the school he perhaps lacked the business acumen that was required. But the school was evidence that Haston could use his reputation more than anything else to make a career from the activity he so enjoyed. Although he could attract sponsors and national press during his climbing career, this was more fleeting than the opportunities Bonington created for himself, and so guiding via the school was the other main alternative in making a career from mountaineering.

The lack of qualifications required by ISM’s guides and Haston’s own performance as a guide were evidence that, although popular, ISM was not especially well run under Haston. This may too have been a continuation from Harlin’s arrangements at the school with his biographer

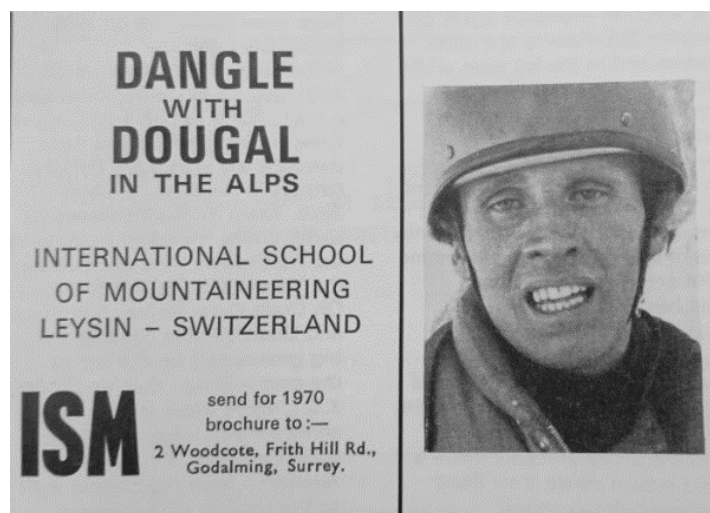


Figure 3 - ISM advert featuring Dougal Haston, 1971

²⁴⁹ *Mountain* 5 (1969), 33.

²⁵⁰ *Mountain* 14 (1971), 6.

²⁵¹ *Mountain* 17 (1971), 42.

²⁵² Connor, *Philosophy of Risk*, 109-10.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 108-9.

explaining how, despite his search for publicity and recognition, the earning from ISM “never ranged high in his priorities”.²⁵⁴ Haston died while skiing near Leysin in 1977, and Pete Boardman then took over the running of ISM. Reflecting on the style in which it had been run under Haston, a letter to Bonington explained that under Boardman’s leadership “I think we can do some rethinking and perhaps make I.S.M. a little bit more commercial, not enough to make Dougal turn over, but to give it some financial viability”.²⁵⁵

Haston's ability marked him out as an exceptional climber of the 1960s and 1970s and he increasingly sought to turn his abilities into earnings. The influence in the 1960s of Harlin and Bonington helped shape this both through guiding and expeditioning. As Gillman has pointed out, he was “determined to make a living from the sport that has become for him a way of life”, and guiding at the school, whether done well or not, was one of the means to do this in the late-1960s.²⁵⁶

Changing Perceptions of Elite Mountaineering

As these individual profiles have shown, the changing structure of mountaineering, from being dominated by an upper middle-class attitude and composition at the start of this era into something altogether more inclusive, had a major bearing on how activities were exploited. The greater acceptance of elite climbers from across the social spectrum signified changing conditions, and this wider social pool meant that more of these individuals sought to earn an income as they could not afford to climb solely for leisure. This encouraged the expansion of entrepreneurial activity in the period, and accompanying commercial thinking. Such progress was part of the overall transformation of the sport during the late 1950s and 1960s.

Bonington, Brown, Haston and Whillans were climbing pioneers, making significant ascents and earning strong reputations. They were also pioneers in applying entrepreneurial attitudes to create

²⁵⁴ Ullman, *Straight Up*, 220-2.

²⁵⁵ Letter from Dave Smith to Chris Bonington, February 21, 1977, MHT, CBO/04/03/01b.

²⁵⁶ Gillman, *In Balance*, 43.

change in the sport and strengthen the links with commercial interests. This was transformative. In a wider sense, although personal enterprise and entrepreneurial activity had been of relatively little concern to political parties up until the end of political consensus in 1958,²⁵⁷ Perkin has explained how in Britain's new industrial society, entrepreneurs were challenging their aristocratic predecessors as they sought capital and free markets.²⁵⁸ This was precisely the dramatic shift that occurred in mountaineering.

Commercialisation focused in these years on the media who backed and reported on new climbs and gave strength to the reputation of these climbers and a small number of others. The evolving wider media landscape, such as the popularity of television, saw the potential in the sport, so the relationship suited both parties, particularly increasing the exposure of climbers. As a result, the likes of Haston and Bonington became sporting celebrities who could use their personal brands to endorse products, activity that would not have suited the prior Alpine Club dominated ideals. The sport was now intentionally pushed into the mainstream rather than sitting isolated as a contented sub-culture. This followed the example of another lifestyle sport – surfing – a decade or two earlier in America. As that new free-spirit pursuit became increasingly popular, lead surfers became celebrities. Greg Noll, who spearheaded the new generation that took up surfing following the advent of the longboard, found he could make a living by designing and manufacturing boards,²⁵⁹ and would be followed in later decades by the likes of Ken Bradshaw and Mark Foo.²⁶⁰ Additionally, Booth has noted other entrepreneurs capitalising on the rising interest in the sport from the 1960s by producing more mainstream and dramatic films.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ Marwick, *British Society*, 107.

²⁵⁸ Perkin, *Rise of Professional Society*, 361.

²⁵⁹ *Riding Giants*, Directed by Stacey Peralta. Forever Films – Studio Canal, 2004.

²⁶⁰ Martin, 'Stealing the Wave'.

²⁶¹ Douglas Booth, 'Surfing Films and Videos: Adolescent Fun, Alternative Lifestyle, Adventure Industry', *Journal of Sport History* 23, no. 3 (1996), 317-321.

The widespread coverage that mountaineering received through television, newspapers, public lectures and books indicated that it was of cultural importance in Britain, and yet the participants in this sport who could make a living from it needed, unlike football or cricket, to sell themselves to develop a career. Bonington noted in 1968 that with more people “both actively climbing and directly interested” it meant “more people can base their lives around climbing, exploiting it commercially to do so”.²⁶² However, with coverage so important, other less fortunate climbers such as Brian Nally who did not have such backing found career climbing was a missed opportunity. Good fortune played an influential role in spite of increasingly favourable and meritocratic conditions.

In *Social Climbing on Annapurna*, Rak noted that alpine style climbing reflected broader social changes. She explained that it was seen as less elitist and, by reducing the emphasis on leadership, part of a more individualistic and pure climbing experience.²⁶³ Up to the late 1960s there were a large number of smaller alpine style British expeditions in the Alps and in South America and this reflected the new individualism that was emerging in the sport. Contrary to the prior tradition of big expeditions and Himalayan success with military run efforts, the era was mainly characterised by smaller teams moving quickly and over shorter periods. This often meant that the chance for members to summit was greater than had they been in a traditional ‘siege style’ expedition such as those on Everest in the 1950s, where only a small number might stand on a summit and inevitably take the plaudits. When asked in the late 1960s about why British expeditions tended to be smaller, particularly when other nations were sending large numbers of big expeditions to the Himalaya, Bonington explained that “the very individualism of British climbers has stopped them doing this”.²⁶⁴ Thus, there was a move away from the traditional team approach to one which was far more individualistic. This became an enabler for entrepreneurial thinking and the new commercial links it brought.

²⁶² Wilson, ‘Christian Bonington’, 17.

²⁶³ Julie Rak, ‘Social Climbing on Annapurna: Gender in High-Altitude Mountaineering Narratives’, *English Studies in Canada* 33, no. 1 (2008), 126-7.

²⁶⁴ Wilson, ‘Christian Bonington’, 14.

Bonington's idea expressed to his mother in 1957 that he wished to become a professional climber was significant, as were the deliberate attempts taken by others as their intentions became clear. With the sport more accommodating to commercial involvement and personal success, and the possible benefits amply demonstrated by the likes of Edmund Hillary and John Hunt, the opportunity was genuine. With varying degrees of success these elite mountaineers sustained their fledgling careers by combining a diverse mix of activities unencumbered by a powerful governing body. Success depended on notable achievements, which could lead to name recognition and a degree of celebrity renown.

Perceptions of climbers were mixed however, and Tom Patey's humorous piece entitled "The Professionals" published in 1969, captured the mood brilliantly. Published in *Mountain* magazine and making effective use of satire, he made many genuine points including:

There are still minor undercurrents of dissatisfaction [within elite earning climbing]. The climbing rank and file are never slow to declaim when their more prominent fellows are seen making a public meal of the fruits of his office. At the same time, criticism is guarded: nobody is going to dismiss the grapes as sour, when he still has an outside chance of climbing the tree.²⁶⁵

This nod towards jealousy was not new however. Bonington, for instance, recounted the experiences of Tony Greenbank who used his role as an Outward Bound instructor to get into freelance writing which led him to become "unpopular with some of his fellow instructors, who resented the fact that he was making money on the side". He went on to speculate that this arose from a "combination of straight jealousy, aligned with resentment of someone publicising their own private world".²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Tom Patey, 'The Professionals', *Mountain* 4 (1969), 27.

²⁶⁶ Bonington, *The Next Horizon*, 233-4.

Patey also noted how so much had changed in the recent years, but that this had been preceded by earlier evidence of actions that sought to maximise income, such as the prior focus on expedition books. According to Patey it would nonetheless “have been bad form to congratulate those blue-blooded pioneers on their professional acumen and foresight”.²⁶⁷ Patey’s article spread to the next edition of the magazine in which the opportunities climbers such as Bonington and Brown took were ridiculed further as part of a “classified directory”.²⁶⁸ But such comments and their inclusion in *Mountain* tells us other things. For instance, it informs us that satire was playing an increasing role in mountaineering just as it was in wider society, and that its transition into the climbing press suggested some parallels with other wider themes. Also, the comments show that the pages of climbing magazines were opening up a new voice and a new opportunity for commentators and the climbing community to pass judgement on the sport, an aspect that developed further in the 1970s. Finally, the articles show that climbers who made climbing a form of work were the target of such jokes and critique suggesting that there was opinion that opposed this group.

Perhaps inevitably there was more pointed criticism of the new direction mountaineering was taking. Charles Evans, in his Alpine Club validity address, expressed concern about how the sport was being viewed by the public which alluded to the new conditions that mountaineers were operating under. Although written shortly after the end of the era in question, Evans’ presidency encompassed the end of the 1960s and his 1970 address was more a reflection of the era that had passed than the one that was being entered into. He stated:

To the completely detached onlooker mountaineering today might present a picture of a highly organised group activity, a sport... in which the audience is all-important... a sport crudely competitive, the attention of its leading stars entirely focussed on the limits of technical achievement made possible by superb physique, by the development of new mental

²⁶⁷ Patey, ‘The Professionals’, 27.

²⁶⁸ Tom Patey, ‘The Professionals, Part 2. A Classified Directory’, *Mountain* 5 (1969), 26-29.

attitudes and by remarkable advances in material equipment; it might seem to him largely professional, entangled with education and instruction of various kinds, with 'show-biz' and publicity, entangled also with the promoting of national, local and personal prestige.²⁶⁹

He went on to explain how he found that:

Competition is more evident than it was; so is the courting of publicity; mountaineering is more used than it was for ends not directly connected with mountains-education, the winning of prestige and the making of money through 'show-biz', chiefly film and television. The pages of climbing periodicals are so filled with descriptions of climbs of extreme difficulty that for the average man repetition produces boredom and hinders appreciation of the great merit of some of these achievements.²⁷⁰

Others commented about how the developments might popularise the sport in an undesirable way. For example, it has been remarked how the events, particularly growing coverage, led individuals to become "media personalities and climbing became 'public property' rather than a deeply private, almost hidden sport".²⁷¹ In a similar vein, when interviewing Bonington for *Mountain Craft*, Ken Wilson explained his opinion that "articles in national newspapers and television programmes like the Old Man of Hoy can only result in encouraging more people to climb. There are a lot of people who object to the mountains becoming more crowded," going on to ask Bonington, "How do you feel about this? Do you feel that there is room?"²⁷²

Concerns such as this were evidence of the older amateur influence that clung on in some parts of the sport. The belief that the crags and hills should only be the preserve of a few, not the many, was a

²⁶⁹ Charles Evans, 'Valedictory Address', *Alpine Journal* 76 (1971), 13.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

²⁷¹ Mike Parsons and Mary B. Rose, 'Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Competition in a Knowledge-Based Sector: The British Outdoor Trade, 1960-1990', EBHA Conference, (2001), 12.

²⁷² Wilson, 'Christian Bonington', 17.

contrast to the wider social values of choice and personal freedom, and this issue is explored in more depth in the next chapter. In 1989 Bonington was referred back to this earlier interview. Reminded that he had answered Wilson by saying “‘The more popular the sport becomes the better. I think the mountains and the country can absorb infinitely more people than are ever like to start climbing’”, Bonington was again pushed on the point, but he stood by his earlier statement. Although he believed that climbing did not need any of the “recruitment campaigns” that some sports were undertaking to raise popularity, he was clearly of the opinion that people who wanted to be in the hills should be. Exchanges and opinions such as this reflect the different attitudes of openness and freedom compared with expectations of exclusiveness and protection of mountain environments.²⁷³

However, significant change had started by the 1960s and almost forgotten were the days of selection based on background and class, blackballing of members and the “spirit of amateurism” that was expected of 1920s expedition members.²⁷⁴ Just as cricket’s amateur and imperial image was wearing off, leaving “an ageing social elite to mourn the passing of the amateur era”, so too mountaineering had turned a similar corner.²⁷⁵ Amateurism and the imperialistic links to the sport related to 1953 were still present, but they were less controlling, less influential and fundamentally outdated by 1969. Polley's remarks relating to mainstream sports that they were “part of class relations rather than simply class stratification” showed the extent of change, and the applicability of these comments to mountaineering shows that it was moving in a comparable way.²⁷⁶

As the experiences of these four climbers have shown, there were a handful of self-initiated core activities that enabled elite climbers to begin turning their pursuit into a means for earning. Notably though, there was often not a drive for profit maximisation amongst these individuals. Bonington

²⁷³ Jim Curran and John Porter, ‘Bonington: The Mountain Interview’, *Mountain* 130 (1989), 31.

²⁷⁴ Osborne, ‘Gender and the Organisation of British Climbing’, 329.

²⁷⁵ Mike Cronin and Richard Holt, ‘The Imperial Game in Crisis: English Cricket and Decolonisation’, in Stuart Ward, ed., *British Culture and the End of Empire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 112.

²⁷⁶ Polley, *Moving the Goalposts*, 134.

seemed content to pay for the next expedition, Haston far from maximised potential at ISM, and Whillans was critical of things that may, in different circumstances, have been financially rewarding. However, they did all demonstrate that the potential existed to begin carving a career from mountaineering, turning it from a recreation or pursuit of the wealthy into one that could potentially be regarded as work and sustained as a career. It was this new-found individualism and enterprise that signalled a significant departure from motivations and norms of earlier years. Despite its connections to 'Britishness' and national pride, these wider national benefits were lesser motivations for more modern climbers when compared with the opportunity to fund the next climb. This was an important change in what attempting summits actually meant to those involved, though there was continuity in how this was perceived as these inherent connections to national sentiments helped stimulate interest and demand for climbers' tales. Ultimately though, success or failure had greater implications for individuals than it had done in the past, as it was now linked deeply to people's livelihoods.

Conclusion

Stewart has regarded the 1953 ascent of Everest as a moment that "signified the end of the era of unchallenged imperial narratives".²⁷⁷ Separately, Birrell explained how the moment was "widely regarded as having recovered some measure of the prestige lost to Britain after the climbing failures of the 1920s" and later decades, notably on Everest.²⁷⁸ The climb in 1953 solidified the link between British national identity and mountaineering and created a sporting tradition that all subsequent climbs would be compared with. The ascent signalled more than these things though, for it was also an important part of the transition from climbing as a deferential, amateur-based recreation into one that offered democratic, realistic, sustained financial opportunity. The climb and aftermath revealed

²⁷⁷ Stewart, 'Tenzing's Two Wrist-Watches', 197.

²⁷⁸ Susan Birrell, 'Approaching Mt. Everest: On Intertextuality and the Past as Narrative', *Journal of Sport History* 34, no. 1 (2007), 17.

to the sport that meritocracy was important, that earning and financial opportunities were viable, and that commercial thinking was acceptable.

By the time the 1960s were drawing to a close, mountaineering was on the cusp of something very new. The years to come saw magazines voice more concerns within the climbing community, big business move into climbing, and individuals develop more options to earn their way through the sport they so often loved. Amateurism retained some influence, but it had changed remarkably since earlier in the century and the ability for amateur hegemony to suppress and constrain commercial interests had been removed. All of this plays into Black's neat summary of the wider changes that occurred in this era:

The 1960s had destroyed a cultural continuity that had lasted from the Victorian period. This reflected the impact of social and ideological trends, including the rise of new cultural forms as well as a new agenda moulded by shifts in the understanding of gender, youth, class, place and race. This left, however, a cultural world of bewildering complexity.²⁷⁹

So much that changed in the sport was in parallel with wider social changes. Greater freedoms, opportunity and individualism in work and in play, and a far more meritocratic society meant that people found they could achieve in ways that they could not have envisaged in the pre-war period. This would be a trend that continued in the years ahead.

²⁷⁹ Black, *Britain since the Seventies*, 55.

Chapter 3. 1970 to 1984 - New Climbing Partners: Roping up with British Businesses in a Newly Mainstream Sport

In the early 1970s Don Whillans was asked about business thinking and commercial practices in mountaineering and the growing perceptions of climbers who were 'selling out'. In response, he remarked that:

If commercialism is inescapable, then the boys who do the deeds should get the benefits. If the benefits become a problem, you can opt out, after all.¹

This feeling that commercial and financial pressures were inevitable pervaded through the 1970s and 1980s throughout British sports as they were transformed by new money becoming available, often through sponsorship. This was an era where the climbing community, and individual climbers within it, were wrestling with the impact that such commercial activities were having on their sport. Previously, the most contentious debates were around social status and amateur values such as in the merger between the Alpine Club and the ACG, but now they were changing. One sign of how the conditions in elite mountaineering had adjusted came in a television documentary that focussed on the successful 1970 Annapurna climb. In it, Chris Bonington, who led the expedition, was asked whether there were any amateurs amongst the climbing team, and "No amateurs" was his response.² Unthinkable as a response twenty years earlier, this declaration and the expectation of the expedition summarised just how much the sport was changing. Constraints had been removed in the 1960s with a growing democratisation. The opening up of the sport so that, at the elite level, it was increasingly based on ability was a permanent shift with long-term implications. The result was that the 1970s and early 1980s witnessed more tangible opportunities, driven by the greater entrepreneurial efforts of a few individuals.

¹ 'Mountain Interview: Don Whillans', *Mountain 20* (1972), 24.

² *The Hard Way – Annapurna South Face 1970*, Directed by John Edwards. 1971.

The most commercial changes of the era were characterised by the greater reliance on corporate sponsors for expeditions, some of which may have been aided by the broader individualistic and business-centric approaches of the time. Thatcherism and the greater encouragement for business and private enterprise created new conditions for initiatives such as sponsorship and entrepreneurship to take off.³ In the case of mountaineering, though, these new ideals were more of an accelerant than instigator, since change was well underway in the 1960s, as detailed in the previous chapter. With greater costs associated to climbs that were increasingly epic in scale, the media alone could not be depended on to provide sufficient expedition funds. Mountaineers, who were themselves responsible for raising funds, sought to attract commercial backers for greater sums and they promised more in return.

This responsibility was unquestionably a form of work, as was the need for potential career climbers to follow prominent expeditions with lecture tours, books and other promotions. It would bring with it a more ruthless approach, more consideration of sponsors, and the need to make climbs more appealing to the public. However, this came at the expense of increasing influence by sponsors. This loss of control to financial backers would not be to the same extent as in the post-1985 period, but it did see the responsibilities to sponsors weigh heavily, influencing climbing style and expedition objectives. Some of these objectives needed to be more publicity friendly – sometimes with novelty value – in order to garner wider interest, leading elite mountaineering to be further distanced from its older sub-culture and placed, at times, firmly and intentionally in the mainstream public consciousness.

Perhaps perversely, in some senses climbing also became more collective in this era than the previous decade. The highest-profile expeditions were large, requiring considerable manpower and skill which was short in supply. This led many of the top mountaineers to work together, despite the career plans

³ Graham Stewart, *Bang! A History of Britain in the 1980s*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2013).

(for some of them) being far more personal. These expensive climbs and the more professionally-minded perspectives also drew criticism from an increasingly vocal opposition. No longer were critical opinions of the modernisation of the sport limited to those of the Alpine Club or RGS. Instead, the pages of new magazines, themselves a key driver in commercial activity, were regularly occupied by opinion and criticism of the transforming public-facing aspects of the sport. Although traditional amateur values had made way for a more diverse and meritocratic sport, defence of some climbing ethics was important to many in the community. After examining the commercial realities of several expeditions in this chapter, a later section moves on to explore this ethical debate and the tensions that emerged. The strength of opinion and visible role of debates that related to how a mountain was climbed or the danger averted by adoption of technology were particularly strong in this era. The critics were implying that although the sport was modernising and changing, it was not progressing in a positive way; standards were not rising. Rather than major routes being achieved in a way that placed mountaineering in good standing and was beneficial for its future, the sport was being shaped by pressures which – for many – did not belong, with money corrupting motivations.

This opposition may have slowed the modernisation of mountaineering to some extent. However, the reality was more complex. Economic factors were now a core part of what it meant to be an elite mountaineer and this could not be undone. Recognising this, criticisms began to change by the end of the era, and the changing opinions of some of the most ‘ethical’ climbers such as Al Rouse who then adopted more professionally-minded stances was a major turning point. Issues of values and ethics were complex and often changing, but their role was just one sign of the significance of the changes that arose in these years, such that by 1985 the elite sport looked very different than it had just fifteen years earlier. This occurred in a period of adjustment for Britain, both at a macro and micro level.

Seventies Britain has often been viewed negatively in general histories. Writers such as Morgan found the national picture to be pessimistic, explaining for example that “the legacy of Empire was allowed

to decay”, in a decade that was “unpermissive” and “unproductive”.⁴ With energy crises, miners strikes, wild economic fluctuations and other “images of social breakdown”, these were tumultuous times.⁵ Britain’s economy staggered between disasters, seemingly out of control. From the early to mid-1970s there were falls in productivity and consumption alongside inflation running to a peak of over 20% in 1975. However, all was not bad. An alternative picture paints a different profile of 1970s Britain. Indeed, these revisions have shown Britain to be in a better and “happier” state than previously portrayed, with day-to-day life appearing more optimistic than the macro picture would imply.⁶

Sandbrook has noted how many people were better off than ever before, with rising consumer purchasing and general wealth, even if this did not translate to increasing productivity at home.⁷ He has argued that many had greater purchasing power evidenced through, for instance, increasing foreign holidays across classes and car ownership.⁸ Indeed, he sees the decade not “as the end of something... it makes much more sense to see [the decade] as the beginning of a new chapter in the story of modern Britain”.⁹ Such individual conditions aided greater individualism which stretched from the pursuit of personal interests through to growing popularity of films that were “suffused by themes of individualism”.¹⁰ A “new wave of enterprise and individualism” under Thatcherism would ingrain

⁴ Kenneth O. Morgan, *The People’s Peace: British History 1945-1989*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 407-8, 433.

⁵ Alwyn W. Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, (London: Aurum Press, 2009), ix – x.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ix – x.

⁷ Dominic Sandbrook, ‘The Weird World of Seventies Britain’. Podcast. University of Oxford History Faculty, 2011, online <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/weird-world-seventies-britain> (accessed October 4, 2017).

⁸ Car ownership is discussed in Dominic Sandbrook, *State of Emergency: The Way We Were, Britain 1970-1974*, (London: Penguin Books, 2011).

⁹ ‘Why does the 1970s get painted as such a bad decade?’, BBC, April 16, 2012, online <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17703483> (accessed March 29, 2017).

¹⁰ Jeremy Black, *Britain since the Seventies: Politics and Society in the Consumer Age*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 67.

this further.¹¹ Improvements to transport and greater personal freedom, allowed people to pursue their interests, and a large part of this new individual expression came through recreation.

Television was shaping how the public consumed sports. Ownership of televisions was now high across all sectors of society and sport had become a staple broadcasting output. Many governing bodies recognised the value that coverage had to their sports' success and this led to more breadth in what people could watch. The efforts of the Professional Golfers' Association, for instance, saw numerous golf tournaments televised each year by the mid-1970s.¹² In mountaineering, television coverage – typically through documentaries – allowed armchair climbers to see these environments and the struggles of those who strove to overcome them.

Television did not, though, replace the print media. Indeed, the popular press diversified their coverage, increasingly reporting on, according to Holt and Mason, “the ‘human interest’ angles not covered on television”.¹³ The media increasingly adopted satire as a mechanism to critique older conventions, most evident through the pages of *Private Eye* which began publication in the early 1960s.¹⁴ As the quotes at the end of the previous chapter from Tom Patey’s “The Professionals” articles showed, this was evident even in the world of British mountaineering, and satire would become central to one of the new and influential magazines of the period, *Crags*. Indeed, magazines were highly vocal and influential in this era both within sports and outside – 1972 seeing the launch of *Cosmopolitan* in the UK – as outputs increased in quality and relevance, and readership rose.¹⁵

The steady decline of amateurism in sports continued as professionalisation expanded in this era. In football, despite a number of concessions in the 1960s, not least the abolition of the maximum wage,

¹¹ Morgan, *The People's Peace*, 437.

¹² Richard Holt and Tony Mason, *Sport in Britain 1945-2000*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 97-8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁴ Brian Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom 1951-1970*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 477-8.

¹⁵ David Stam and Andrew Scott, *Inside Magazine Publishing*, (London: Routledge, 2014), 29-30.

it was not until the 1970s that greater contractual freedom arose. This brought with it new earning potential for top players, whilst earnings from endorsements continued from earlier years.¹⁶ In athletics it would not be until 1981 that pressure on the Amateur Athletics Association led it to allow both players and governance bodies to overtly earn from the sport.¹⁷ Athletics also benefitted from extensive television coverage, with new broadcasting at this time seeming “to offer a new route to the heart of the nation”.¹⁸

The increased exposure of sport to wider audiences through this new media drove changes in commercial interests which increased rapidly throughout this era. In her much broader writings on the evolution in advertising and branding, Naomi Klein has explained that development of a “corporate ‘personality’” was increasingly important and this was in part aided by “pushing the envelope in sponsorship deals” helping to explain why interest in sport rose.¹⁹ For instance, events such as Test Match cricket found sponsorship from the likes of Cornhill, and individual teams established commercial partners to back them in exchange for brand prominence. A Committee of Enquiry into Sports Sponsorship estimated that the value of sports sponsorship rose from £2.5million in 1971, to £40million in 1981, to over £100million in 1983 demonstrating the significantly higher sums involved.²⁰ As sport developed closer links with corporations they would, as Porter explained, “become more business like in the way that [they] conducted... affairs”,²¹ though it was not only the governance bodies that benefitted. The rising press interest in sport stars and the relaxation of what

¹⁶ John Harding and Gordon Taylor, *Living to Play: From Soccer Slaves to Soccerati – A Social History of the Professionals*, (London: Robson Books, 2003). See Appendix 2, 258-9, and 41-47.

¹⁷ Martin Polley, “‘The Amateur Rules’: Amateurism and Professionalism in Post-War British Athletics’, in Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, eds., *Amateurs and Professionals in Post-War British Sport*, (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 83.

¹⁸ Holt and Mason, ‘Sport in Britain’, 104.

¹⁹ Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2010), 7-8.

²⁰ The Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR), *Committee of Enquiry into Sports Sponsorship: The Howell Report*, (London: CCPR, 1983), 12.

²¹ Dilwyn Porter, ‘British Sport Transformed: Sport, Business, and the Media since 1960’, in Richard Coopey and Peter Lyth, eds., *Business in Britain in the Twentieth Century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 338-9.

it meant to be a professional sports person meant that individuals could benefit too thanks to the “wider advertising opportunities [which] emerged as the media became more expert at dramatizing individual achievement”.²² In some sports, and importantly for this thesis, this could serve to escalate individual tendencies over that of a team.

Against this backdrop the outdoors was an important aspect of British life, as were other aspects highlighted by Black as part of a general attitude towards healthy living and fitness.²³ Improved recreational opportunity and the potential to travel meant that crags and mountains were more easily accessible to the masses. In a 1977 survey cited by Marwick, 31% of men and 27% of women enjoyed regular “countryside activities” compared with just 6% who played football, although “watching football was still a major pastime”. This contributed to, as Marwick has put it, interest in “refreshment of the spirit”.²⁴ The more formal inclusion of outdoors activities in education such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award were also important in emphasising outdoor leisure, and these were part of a change to how education was being delivered. Such uses of outdoors space at a grassroots level connected more people to recreations linked to mountaineering, with sufficient parallels to feel some connection to the climbers noted in this thesis. This served to expand a curious and knowledgeable audience who were actively interested in many of the pivotal expeditions that took place between 1970 and 1984.

This chapter therefore assesses the widespread adjustments made within elite British mountaineering as traditional amateur influences were almost entirely removed. This was the era that accelerated the transition from the traditional view of mountaineering as part of a national interest and well-to-do climbers, into one where it was evidently a form of work for some. This built on the emergence of professional-perspectives in the previous era, and led to the expansion of guiding and other forms of climbing careers in the subsequent era. Mountaineering began to fully sustain the careers of some

²² Holt and Mason, *Sport in Britain*, 111.

²³ Black, *Britain since the Seventies*, 64.

²⁴ Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, (London: Penguin, 1996), 97, 247.

climbers and this emerged as a stronger motivation than promotion of 'Britishness', seeping into how it was portrayed. Commercialisation, encouraged by a new mindset for the sports entrepreneurs, began to distort mountaineering, affecting how it appealed, and was presented, to a wider audience. The peak of public interest came in 1975 which was, essentially, confirmation that a new and economically viable form of the sport had emerged, running contrary to the pre-war version of mountaineering. This shift was prompted by the entrepreneurial efforts of a small number of influential climbers, some of whom were introduced in the previous chapters, whilst other newcomers also played an important role in determining the direction the sport took.

A later section of this chapter analyses the ethical opposition to new climbing practices which influenced how mountaineering came to terms with its more modern format. Prior to that, the chapter pivots around a small number of important expeditions, each different in character but significant in demonstrating what was increasingly normal in this environment, and this began with a widely reported attempt on one of the 14 highest peaks in the world, Annapurna.

Annapurna 1970

The changes of the 1960s made membership of the Alpine Club more representative of British climbers, but neither it nor any other body took a formal controlling role. The BMC and the MEF retained their financial granting responsibilities from the earlier era with the BMC responsible for issuing grants that came from the government via the Sports Council. The Sports Council did not interfere in how funding was distributed, and the BMC and the MEF tended to issue grants to the same expeditions.²⁵ This financial lever saw these bodies exert some control over the sport. In reality the relatively small sums involved meant these funding decisions were significant for small scale climbs undertaken by individuals for whom mountaineering was more likely to be a recreation, but they rarely determined whether a high-profile expedition took place.

²⁵ Jim Perrin, 'High Interview: Dennis Gray', *High* (June 1984), 36.

High profile expeditions of the early 1970s were characterised by high altitude, difficult routes on large mountain 'faces' in the greater ranges. These became the new norm as the Himalayas became a logistically easier destination than it had before. Air travel aided this considerably, reducing travel time and freight logistics from the overland travel necessary in prior decades. Indeed, some airlines became actively involved in sponsoring climbs, demonstrating the mutual benefits that were possible. The growing accessibility of such destinations saw the Alps fall out of favour amongst elite mountaineers. Mountain 'face' routes were less conventional and more vertical than prior Himalayan routes and required certain skills, equipment and often more time and therefore money. Generally following a siege style, such climbs saw ropes fixed for the majority of the route with multiple stocked camps and a number of pairs or small groups working on the mountain. The first of these major expeditions was to Annapurna in 1970. This 8,091m peak was the first of the 14 eight-thousand metre summits to be reached, in 1950 by a French expedition.²⁶ One of the most spectacular areas of the Himalaya, its imposing south face was an enviable challenge for a well-equipped team, and it would be Chris Bonington who led a British attempt on the face in siege style.

On this occasion, rather than raise finances from the media or other sponsorships the MEF funded the entire climb. As Faux and Mounter pointed out in an article in *The Times*, "Hitherto only the 1955 British Kanchenjunga expedition has received such sponsorship."²⁷ For those organising the climb, chiefly Bonington and agent George Greenfield, the backing was a "tremendous relief", but accepting this role meant that the climb, according to Bonington, "seemed to be coming under the wing of the Establishment – something which all of us had regarded with some distrust, having been very much outside these circles".²⁸

²⁶ Maurice Herzog, *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8000-Metre Peak*, (London: Pimlico, 1997).

²⁷ Ronald Faux and Julian Mounter, 'Fresh Assaults on Himalayas', *The Times*, March 3, 1970, 10.

²⁸ Chris Bonington, *Annapurna South Face*, (London: Cassell, 1972), 26.

In exchange for the full funding of the climb, the MEF secured the rights to the expedition, potentially enabling it to profit from the climb in a similar way to that of the Everest 1953 ascent. Indeed, the expectation was high, and some commentators had foresight to how this might define the sport:

Many mountaineers in Britain see it rather as the 'last of the great British expeditions'. With such a route on such a face at such altitude the climbers will be exposed to every weapon in nature's armoury. 'What else can there be after this?' they ask.²⁹

A major British ascent in a new challenging style of climbing on a recognisable peak could surely be used to generate an income. After several weeks on the mountain and efforts by various climbing pairs, a successful summit bid was launched by Whillans and Haston, generally recognised as the strongest climbers in Britain. The success was notable, and the climbers' reputation rose markedly. They found fame and the spotlight both in the climbing community and the wider public.

Indeed, the publicity was substantial, particularly in reaction to the later television documentary entitled *The Hard Way: Annapurna South Face*, directed by John Edwards.³⁰ A review of the film in the *Daily Mirror*, alluding to the fact that footage was shot by the climbers themselves, explained:

There have been a number of good, exciting suspense-packed television stories about mountains, from the Old Man of Hoy in the Orkneys to the assaults on the north face of the Eiger in the Alps. But not one of them comes near last night's Annapurna South Face. From now on the professionals might as well stay at home and leave the shooting to the boys themselves... Next year when they are nominating items for the annual television awards they mustn't forget this one.³¹

²⁹ Faux and Mounter, 'Fresh Assaults', 10.

³⁰ *The Hard Way – Annapurna South Face 1970*, Directed by John Edwards. 1971.

³¹ Photocopied clipping entitled 'An Epic of Guts and Endurance', *Daily Mirror*, March 17, 1971. Enclosed in letter from John Edwards (Thames TV) to Don Whillans, March 30, 1971, AC, Don Whillans Box 2, Annapurna loose files, 1922/P48.

With such reactions, it was perhaps inevitable that other similar climbs would follow, with hopeful climbers recognising that their careers could be enhanced through this type of coverage. However, the MEF would not be so generous in fully financing such expeditions thereafter and subsequent grants were much more limited. This reflected the perceived exceptional nature of the Annapurna expedition, and the aims of the MEF to facilitate other efforts by climbers who were less likely or inclined to pursue commercial options. What success on Annapurna had given, though, was recognition that a climb such as this, with a British team, could appeal to the public and generate opportunities for the individuals and other stakeholders involved to raise their own profiles. On this occasion, the MEF sought to maximise the returns and lecturing proved an effective way of doing so.

In the previous era, lecturing was emerging as a staple earner for climbers, and often a substantial one. Demand was strong and Faux commented how “Lectures on the [Annapurna] expedition have since filled halls throughout Britain; the adventure lit interest among lesser mountaineers and among those who prefer their cliff hanging to be second hand”.³² Parsons and Rose cited the importance of the coverage gained from these lectures, especially those sponsored by Pindisports in London, and for the publicity they gave the manufacturers of products used on the mountain.³³ Thanks to the financial arrangements, the earnings from the lectures were returned to the MEF. On other expeditions where this duty did not exist, some climbers used their own brand to exploit lecturing opportunity – after all they owned their own labour. For instance, separate from the Annapurna climb, Bonington’s profile by the mid-1970s allowed him to charge substantial fees in the region of £300 - £360 plus VAT per lecture.³⁴ Unsurprisingly, a 1976 letter from Bonington’s agent revealed that a UK lecture season of

³² Ronald Faux, 'Lure of the Hardest Climb', *The Times*, January 16, 1971, 12.

³³ Mike Parsons and Mary Rose, *Invisible on Everest: Innovation and the Gear Makers*, (Philadelphia: Northern Liberties Press, 2003), 235.

³⁴ 'Invoice from Chris Bonington Lectures to Mr. E. Poole for 'Everest the Hard Way', September 18, 1976; letter from Betty Prentice to Mr. E. Poole, September 23, 1976, AC, Collection of correspondence regarding Chris Bonington Lecture Tour, 1922/F18.

local events “can earn a very substantial amount”.³⁵ Reflecting their potential for income generation, the magazine *Crags* was amongst the other organisations in the sector that became involved in setting up a lecture series.³⁶

It is not clear by how much the MEF profited in 1970 from the Annapurna lectures, film, coverage and book, but it was reported afterwards that these activities helped to fill their coffers.³⁷ That the MEF was prepared to recoup as much financial benefit as possible indicated that it did not resist the commodification of the climb. Indeed, it actively sought such opportunities out. When the MEF was experiencing some financial issues later in this era one of the options set out was that they should ask “profitable expeditions to make contributions from profits to the M.E.F on their return”.³⁸ Its willingness to use commercially derived funds in the same way that the 1953 ascent of Everest had, showed that it accepted the modernisation of the sport and the necessity this had on money and how it was raised. Being one of the genuinely influential bodies in the sport this was an important sign of how commercial activity was no longer regarded as inappropriate or unacceptable. That the MEF would later provide funds to expeditions that already had commercial sponsorship reiterated this point further.

Despite the unique funding arrangements for the Annapurna expedition, divisions and tensions amongst the climbers surfaced, and would continue to do so in the years afterwards. This was driven in large part by the relatively small number of opportunities available to grow or sustain a personal brand upon which a career could be founded, and the growing number of people pursuing this option.

³⁵ George Greenfield letter to Alan Tritton, May 12, 1976, MHT, ATR/2/2.

³⁶ *Crags* 9 (1977), 43; *Crags* 11 (1978), 4.

³⁷ Alan Rouse, ‘Alan Rouse Column’, *High* (July 1984), 11.

³⁸ ‘Report on the policy of the Mount Everest Foundation submitted by the Committee of the Alpine Club for consideration by the Management Committee of the MEF’, attached to letter from M. F. Baker to “Bob” [R. Lawford?], March 3, 1972, AC, AC Circulars 1969-74, 1922/ACTS43.

The need to be a successful summiteer was at the crux of generating a positive reputation and heroic image, so it was inevitable that competitive feelings would emerge.

On Annapurna this ran deep, exemplified by accusations being made against Don Whillans that he was doing little load-carrying, perhaps to keep himself in the best shape to be selected for the first summit attempt. Connor has explained how “[Nick] Estcourt and [Martin] Boysen never totally forgave Whillans” for this,³⁹ and Whillans himself explained two years later how the rise in career prospects was at the core of these issues, remarking that:

I think increased professionalism is tending to make people try to justify themselves if they don't do well on an expedition. Whenever you go on an expedition these days, particularly where personal glory and some money are involved, you'll find more and more of this twisting from people who feel they haven't had their fair share of the winnings... This type of professionalism could tear an expedition apart in the future and nobody will get anywhere.⁴⁰

Arguably the divisions it created in the aftermath of 1970 suggested this had already happened. Whillans then noted how:

It's [more commercial approach and mass media interest] happened in the last three years. But things move fast these days and I think it will reach its peak very quickly. Then you will have people stating their own terms for going on expeditions, drawing up contracts and big deals, instead of just a group of lads getting together as we used to do in the past.⁴¹

These stresses were a direct result of the growing role that money was playing, and the function of climbing as a form of work. While the MEF would facilitate some climbs, it did nothing to help climbers earn from their pursuit. Individuals alone could do this and securing name recognition – for which

³⁹ Jeff Connor, *Dougal Haston: The Philosophy of Risk*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd, 2002), 153.

⁴⁰ 'Mountain Interview: Don Whillans', *Mountain* 20 (1972), 27.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

successfully summiting major peaks was so important – was necessary to do so. This was why genuine ability rather than social background played such an important role in changing the composition of Britain's climbing elite.

Whilst the elite group was small, some individuals within it opted not to pursue mountaineering as a career. Their motivations were akin to those embedded in the sports' heritage as they did not seek personal gain, and were closer to amateur values. Although there were flare ups in the mountaineering media about such differing perspectives, there was little animosity between professionally-minded climbers and amateurs on the mountain when they climbed together. One example of such mutual respect is evident in the composition of expeditions. In the 1970s several expeditions took along a mixture of these groupings, and worked well together. Tut Braithwaite, highly regarded rock climber and mountaineer who became president of the Alpine Club in the late 2000s, did not pursue the limelight, much like Ian Clough. As one contemporary explained "Because he [Tut] didn't write in the magazines, his name was never in the spotlight like some, but every year he'd add another dozen big alpine climbs to his experience."⁴² Mo Anthoine, born in the Midlands in the late 1930s, was another who found himself alongside more professionally minded colleagues. Anthoine, who was present on many of the large scale and alpine expeditions of the 1970s, was regarded as a climber who "valued the traditions of climbing".⁴³ Despite heroic efforts and a high standard of climbing he took the backseat in terms of publicity and maximising potential material gain. This is perhaps most evident when he played a vital role in the rescue of Scott and Bonington on Baintha Brakk (more commonly known as 'The Ogre') in Pakistan in 1977 but, in the words of climber and commentator McNaught-Davis, he "typically, took no credit for this epic".⁴⁴ Although professionals and amateurs experienced little conflict, the tensions between hopeful career climbers that were

⁴² Adrian Burgess and Alan Burgess, *The Burgess Book of Lies*, (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 2001), 139-140.

⁴³ Ian McNaught-Davis, 'Mo Anthoine 1939-1989', *Mountain* 130 (1989), 18-19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

hinted at in the above exchanges would resurface in many subsequent high-profile climbs, including on Mount Everest.

Everest 1972

It quickly became clear that the MEF would not and could not afford to fully fund climbs in the way that it had on Annapurna. Other sources of income were needed to support expensive expeditions. Whilst in the pre-1970 period sponsorship of climbs relied heavily on the media, the 1970s and early 1980s were a different proposition. Media sponsorship could not stretch to the sums needed to get the climbs off the ground, yet in its place corporate entities were increasingly involved in funding the sport. Climbers needed new ideas and initiatives to secure such backing, and sometimes the sponsors exerted pressures or control on the climbers themselves. However, whilst there may have been some uneasy relationships, these new financial avenues meant that the sport could be pursued as a full-time occupation, and sometimes a very profitable one.

In 1971, a high profile international attempt on Everest's highly prestigious south west face was mounted. This route was highly sought after as both a technical challenge and because of the prominence and notoriety that was guaranteed by virtue of it being a new route on the world's highest mountain. The international composition of members was a new direction for large scale expeditions. Garnering much publicity, sponsorship and coverage, and including several British climbers and reporters amongst the 33 full expedition members, the 1971 expedition proved unsuccessful and ended in acrimony due to conflicting interests of the climbers.⁴⁵ On the financial side, a 'post-mortem'

⁴⁵ Unsworth highlighted some of the reasons that the expedition ended so badly, including that "Few of [the climbers] had climbed together and those who had tended to cleave together in a natural defence against the ambitions of the rest, anxious to protect their own reputations... Islands of isolation grew up, not helped by the language barrier." He then explained that there were too many star climbers, noting "there were too many chiefs and not enough Indians". Walt Unsworth, *Everest: The Mountaineering History*, (London: Bâton Wicks, 2000), 405.

examination in *Mountain* explained how the search for sponsorship had become one that needed to be more commercially astute:

The commercial trappings of expeditionary projects are more overt today than they were in the past, simply because expeditions are now so numerous that money is harder to raise and financial backers are therefore able to demand more obvious links. No backer will invest cash unless he stands to get value for money. Good expeditions have an organization capable of dealing with this problem soon after they return from the field. They will make the backers feel that they were part of the whole show, and that their contributions really did make a difference.⁴⁶

It was notable that there were no further high-profile 'international' efforts in the years that followed, perhaps a result of the personnel difficulties and the effect that it may have had on one of the 'selling points' for national expeditions, in that that they could be regarded as being in the nation's interests. Indeed, Unsworth has explained that from the outset securing the necessary finances was difficult because "Each country, either through its media or some charitable body was willing to contribute *something* towards the costs, but never enough" which led the expedition leader Swiss-American Norman Dyhrenfurth to invite "participants from different countries simply for the extra cash they could bring in, although every addition to the team pushed up the costs even further".⁴⁷

In the year after this failure the first all-British attempt on the south west face took place. The 1972 attempt would be in siege style, despite differing initial intentions.⁴⁸ The effort was led by Chris Bonington and although it proved to be unsuccessful it demonstrated the broadening appeal of the sport to the diverse backers who became directly involved. This was elaborated on three years later

⁴⁶ Ken Wilson and Mike Pearson, 'Everest: Post-Mortem of an International Expedition', *Mountain* 17 (1971), 12.

⁴⁷ Unsworth, *Everest*, 404.

⁴⁸ Bonington originally explained that there would be just four climbers and a lightweight style that he considered to be "a very exciting new concept in Himalayan mountaineering". Letter from Chris Bonington to Soli S Mehta, April 25, 1972, MHT, CBO/01/06/01/01.

in a follow up expedition to the same route again led by Bonington. To fund these costly climbs a new side of the sport was developed in boardrooms across the country and further afield where mountaineers sought to justify a considerable outlay for potentially substantial returns, particularly in terms of coverage, sponsorship and publicity.

In 1972, the expedition came to rely heavily on sponsorship alongside the provision of relatively small grants. The effort required to raise the £60,000 needed was considerable and fell, mostly, to Bonington. Relatively modest by Himalayan standards, much of the cost arose from transport and provisions. However, it was not insignificant given this cost for a single expedition compared with an overall British sports sponsorship value of around £2.5million the year before.⁴⁹ In pursuing this sum Bonington was required to use his entrepreneurial skills, initially evident in the 1960s, to connect the corporate world to the mountaineering one, extending the list of interested parties well beyond the media outlets who had backed his and others' climbs in the 1960s.⁵⁰ Whilst media money was still available – newspaper, television and publishing – the scale of the finances required meant additional sources were needed.

To attract potential sponsors, letters were written to a diverse selection of companies explaining how sponsorship of the British expedition could be used. This was particularly important given that mountaineering may not have been an obvious area for organisations to become financially involved in. There were, though, some specific reasons why such sponsorship may have offered benefits to a company that could not be matched by other sports. The connections between mountaineering and Britishness were central. As referred to in the previous chapter, the sport carried with it a sense of being part of an invented tradition that connected it to past national glories. Having been reinforced by 1953 success on Everest, subsequent climbs were infused with a sense of national pride, something

⁴⁹ CCPR, *The Howell Report*, 12.

⁵⁰ Chris Bonington, *Everest South West Face*, (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 77.

that potential sponsors may value. Further, there was the importance of visual appeal in attracting sport sponsorship.⁵¹ Mountaineering excelled in this area, with adventure, landscape and the linkages to heroic feats part of the offering.

The letters from Bonington explained how backing this climb was a unique opportunity and that it is “the greatest unconquered challenge left on the surface of the earth” before highlighting that the expedition was British and that “Massive international teams composed of many famous climbers have tasted defeat here”.⁵² They were deliberate in playing up the difficulty of the climb and considering how this could be used in advertising for sponsors. A letter to Ovaltine, written after the company had made an initial offer of goods, demonstrated this connection whereby Bonington explained that in exchange for cash funding the expedition could offer the following:

We are in a position to guarantee to you that you would be the only supplier of drinks to the expedition, who would receive public acknowledgement, and photographs of the drinks that you have supplied. This could, obviously, be used by yourselves to have maximum effect from a press relations angle, and we should also be very happy for you to use our pictures and testimonial in your advertising campaign. In addition, we can assure you of really professional, first class photographs of Ovaltine being prepared and drunk, high on the flanks of Everest.⁵³

In other cases, advertisers asked whether “photographs could be taken of the products in use, [in this case dressings from Strenex Fabrics Ltd] to be used for advertising purposes.”⁵⁴ Exposure through media, photography and literature was seen as offering a mechanism for sponsors to benefit from being involved.

⁵¹ Stephen Hardy, Brian Norman, and Sarah Sceery, 'Towards a History of Sport Branding', *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 4, no. 4 (2012): 482-509.

⁵² Bob Stoodley, standard letter outline sent to industry, undated and untitled, MHT, CBO/01/06/02/05.

⁵³ Chris Bonington letter to Brian Balcomb, July 10, 1972, MHT, CBO/01/06/02/04.

⁵⁴ Letter from B C Holland to Graham Tiso, July 11, 1972, MHT, CBO/01/06/02/04.

Over the coming years, as communications with prospective sponsors became more developed, letters such as those sent by Bonington in 1972 evolved into brochures which typically outlined the climb and spelt out why funding would be a positive decision for a corporation. Brochures became a common tactic for fundraising purposes, and were used to good effect, for instance in a later 1978 expedition to K2's West Ridge. On this occasion raising awareness of the scale of the challenge was the main theme, as the brochure explained: "The expedition will undoubtedly attract considerable interest both in this country and abroad. It is considered one of the most challenging problems left in the world" going on to explain that "in return [for £25,000] we can offer main sponsorship of the expedition with all the benefits in terms of public relations and advertising that this type of sponsorship can yield" as well as recognition in the subsequent expedition book and other media.⁵⁵ LRC International (a London based, rubber product manufacturer, later becoming London International Group) became the sponsors of the expedition and the company chairman highlighted amongst other things the importance of the nationality of the climb saying:

LRC is delighted to be associated with such an imaginative British project. We wish the team every success and see our support as a unique opportunity to help towards greater awareness of LRC and its diverse product range.⁵⁶

In private LRC also noted how the company was coming out of a reorganisation and with new branding the "timing was right to project LRC to a much wider public".⁵⁷ They were also keen to move "away from the image of only being associated with Durex".⁵⁸ LRC expected other benefits such as expedition

⁵⁵ Brochure enclosed in letter from Chris Bonington to David Spence at Coral Leisure Group, January 18, 1978, MHT, CBO/01/13/02/02.

⁵⁶ Press release entitled 'K2 budget fears dispelled by eleventh hour sponsorship from LRC International', April 10, 1978, MHT, TAS Box 5.

⁵⁷ 'Background notes: LRC International – sponsors of the British K2 Expedition', April 10, 1978, MHT, TAS Box 5.

⁵⁸ 'British K2 Expedition 1978', meeting minutes, March 7, 1978, MHT, CBO/01/13/01/01.

members giving a presentation to their senior management team, and to visit a factory.⁵⁹ However, once on the mountain in 1978 the climb was abandoned after an avalanche killed Nick Estcourt – “The spirit of the expedition died with Nick” Doug Scott later remarked – and LRC’s sponsorship was reduced to £10,000.⁶⁰ This reflected the reality of climbing in the greater ranges, and the death of a climber on such expeditions became unfortunately common, meaning the prospect of an expedition coming to an early end in this way was always a possibility.

Expedition brochures performed an important role in reaching commercial sponsors, especially those otherwise unfamiliar with the sport and unconnected to it. The move into this area of overt sales pitches sent to numerous potentially interested parties, signified that the sport was behaving in increasingly business minded ways, another sign of the pressures created by economic forces. They were popular amongst the most overtly commercial expeditions, but were used in other climbs too. A 1976 Army Mountaineering Association (AMA) expedition used a brochure to help generate income, explaining how “we were in a position to look to the world outside the Army and so prepared a brochure stating the ‘whys’ and ‘wherefores’ of the expedition and a brief resume of its budget”.⁶¹ Suffice to say, there would be no need for such commercial brochures without the need for commercial partners.

However, for the Everest climb of 1972 Bonington was conscious that care needed to be taken with the commercial approaches that were pursued. He was aware that non-financial patronage and support for the expedition was being gathered from “the Establishment”, in particular from Lord Hunt and the National Sports Council. In a note, he explained that this meant that “commercial exploitation of support given to the expedition must, therefore, be restrained” for fear of creating awkward

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Doug Scott, *Himalayan Climber: A Lifetime's Quest to the World's Greater Ranges*, (London: Baton Wicks, 1994), 122.

⁶¹ Jon Fleming and Ronald Faux, *Soldiers on Everest*, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1977), 205.

conflicts.⁶² The same note also stated that a “direct association with smoking advertisements must be ruled out”,⁶³ hinting at the need to ensure the image of the sport was protected and siding with the 34% of adults who agreed with a ban on tobacco advertising in sport.⁶⁴

Despite these concerns about the expedition’s image, Rothmans would indeed become a co-sponsor, suggesting that compromises could be made and that the influence of the climbing ‘establishment’ continued to be side-lined. This was also a period of growing prominence of tobacco and alcohol companies in sports sponsorship. As Collins and Vamplew have suggested, it was the “late 1950s and early 1960s that the importance and value of such [sports] sponsorships began to be systematically explored”, and by the 1970s sponsorship by such companies was increasingly mainstream.⁶⁵ Offering £3,750 initially, with a further £2,500 if the summit was reached, Rothmans’ role was secured. An unsigned contract stated that in exchange for these sums Rothmans requested all worldwide commercial and cinema rights to use the footage shot. Further, commercial film credits would read “The... ascent of the South West Face of Everest by the 1972 British Everest Expedition. A Great British Achievement brought to you by Rothmans, the greatest name in cigarettes”.⁶⁶ Whilst the contract in question is unsigned and not all of these conditions seemed to come to pass, one can deduce that some type of similar arrangement was reached as Rothmans’ sponsorship is noted in the post-expedition book.⁶⁷

Bonington may also have been mindful of the emerging pressures from parts of the climbing community. The re-emergence of some amateur perspectives within debates about the proper ‘ethics’ for mountaineering was increasingly notable, thanks in large part to the specialist press. Critique of

⁶² ‘Brief for Bob Stoodley on obtaining commercial and industrial support for the Everest South West Face Expedition’, written by Chris Bonington, undated, MHT, CBO/01/06/02/05.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ CCPR, *The Howell Report*, 20.

⁶⁵ Tony Collins and Wray Vamplew, *Mud, Sweat and Beers: A Cultural History of Sport and Alcohol*, (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 58.

⁶⁶ Letter and contract from C. F. Duncan (Rothmans) to George Greenfield, August 14, 1972, MHT, CBO/01/06/02/06.

⁶⁷ Bonington, *Everest South West Face*, 88.

the style of climb, and size of the expedition team arose, and – as is further analysed later in this chapter – began to play on the minds of the climbers. Trying to find a compromise between sources of funding and acceptable practice was difficult, particularly when each of these pressures were fickle, though Bonington succeeded in making this work in 1972.

In a sign of more overt professional-thinking, payment to the mountaineers was part of the funding expectations. A letter from Nick Estcourt, who acted as expedition treasurer, to the BMC provides an insight:

I have set aside the sum of £10,000 in my budget for payment of individuals in the expedition for work on the Expedition film, book and articles... We are not taking a media team with us, since many of the expedition besides being highly qualified for the climb in hand are also professionals (sic) in the communications field... I realise that we might have levelled at us the accusation of over professionalisation (sic), but it must be remembered that all members of the team are married with commitments at home... this is why it is essential to earmark a realistic sum for this type of payment, particularly since much of the work on the book, film and articles will have to be completed back in England.⁶⁸

Although not the majority backer, media money contributed too. Hodder and Stoughton purchased the UK book rights for £5,850, with the American rights selling to another publisher for £4,250. The *Observer* newspaper brought the rights to newspaper and magazine coverage for £6,750, with a £2,250 bonus should the summit be reached, whilst television rights went to ITN/Thames for £7,650.⁶⁹ Other less typical funding routes were also explored including wall charts, schools' projects, an "appeal to industry", and postcard covers to be sent from Kathmandu hoping to raise some £2,000⁷⁰ which

⁶⁸ Letter from Nick Estcourt (not stated) to Peter Ledebor (BMC), undated, MHT, CBO/01/06/02/01.

⁶⁹ 'British Everest Expedition 1972: Newsletter 4', undated, MHT, CBO/01/06/02/01.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

had become a fairly popular way of raising funds.⁷¹ The total sum was raised from a range of sponsors and the diversity of the companies involved demonstrated that this commercial approach to mountaineering could work, with different industries seeing the potential from such backing. These entrepreneurial approaches had proven that wider commercialisation of the sport was possible.

A later part of this chapter discusses the ethical concerns that the climbing community had with this and other expeditions. However, it is worth recognising here the nature of some of these criticisms. A critique in the pages of the magazine *Rocksport*, for example, took issue with the Everest 1972 letters asking for donations in exchange for postcards, and coupled this with criticism of media hype, team selection and plentiful provisions. It explained that:

It's all very altruistic to want to conquer Everest for the British, but whoever does it is made for life in these commercial times. That for me is the final straw. They are going to conquer a face that is only a problem because they and their predecessors have made it one to get the money from the sponsors and now that they can't get enough on their own account they want you and me... to pay for them to go [via postcard purchases].⁷²

The magazine also took issue with the controversial team makeup which omitted Don Whillans, likening it to leaving Gordon Banks out of the football World Cup, or Geoffrey Boycott out of a Test Match.⁷³ Indeed, this was part of a return to the disputes over team members and their role on the mountain that featured on Annapurna. For the 1972 Everest climb Bonington decided not to include Whillans in the climbing team, and journalist Peter Gillman explained that:

Some climbers, including Whillans himself, believe that the main factor in Bonington's decision was commercial competition between the two men. 'Chris has become completely

⁷¹ For example see postcard, undated, signed by five members with 'BASE CAMP' stamp, 1974, MHT, British Nepalese Expedition collection, BNE/1.

⁷² 'Editorial', *Rocksport*, (August 1972), 4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

carried away in trying to establish himself as the number one, the only number one,' says Whillans. Another climber, friendly towards Bonington, contends: 'Chris was absolutely against having Don on Everest because Don is his nearest rival as a professional mountaineer.⁷⁴

Bonington denied that this was the reason he did not select Whillans in 1972. Instead he blamed interpersonal issues, citing Whillans "forthright, abrasive style" and their individual roles and expectations on the climb. Bonington concluded that "It would not have been easy to run the expedition in the way that I wanted with Don taking part and so I decided to leave him behind".⁷⁵

However, even if it was not competition that troubled Bonington, missed opportunities certainly did. Milburn and Jones report how, when dealing with a conflict that would see him miss a televised Eiger project, that

the prospect that.... somebody else would cavort across the television screens of Europe was almost too much for him to bear, and it was only after he had tried, unsuccessfully, to have the Eiger programme re-scheduled that he was forced to accept, grudgingly, that even he could not manage to be in two places at once.⁷⁶

In such a tight circle of participants it is difficult to believe that competition between career climbers was not real, and this would make it no different from other sports.

A sign of the growing commercial approach was that a finance partnership was considered in 1972 between expedition members to ensure an equal distribution of monies and use of publicity.⁷⁷ Signifying how the measures were not haphazard and last minute, it appears these arrangements were

⁷⁴ Peter Gillman, *In Balance: Twenty Years of Mountaineering Journalism*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), 52-3.

⁷⁵ Chris Bonington, *The Everest Years in Boundless Horizons: The Autobiography of Chris Bonington*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000), 465.

⁷⁶ Trevor Jones and Geoff Milburn, *Cumbrian Rock*, (Glossop: Pic Publications, 1988), 209.

⁷⁷ Unsigned partnership agreement, undated, MHT, CBO/01/06/02/06.

properly made and helped bring some degree of certainty to the climbers who were relying on an income from the climb. Post-expedition lectures and the book helped raise some profit for the climbers and by mid-1974 there was a gross income of almost £4,600 with a net profit of £2,895. These figures may have been modest but given the financial scale of the climb and the new circumstances in which the expedition was funded, they proved that with the effective commercialisation of an expedition – and even if it did not successfully climb the mountain – additional earnings could be generated.⁷⁸

Although corporate backers were beginning to recognise the benefits that sponsoring climbing could bring, not all ‘popular’ sports suited these forms of modernisation. As Sandbrook has explained with respect to angling, despite its popularity it “did not really appeal to the affluent young people who mattered to advertisers”.⁷⁹ Mountaineering on the other hand evidently was beneficial and did hold the right image, values and associations that companies found to be worth investing substantial sums in. Further, resistance to this flow of new money was waning. When the *Alpine Journal* included an article in a 1973 circular entitled “Sponsorship for expedition” it was clear that sponsorship was no longer being severely frowned upon by even the most traditional institutions. The article explained that:

An American company has expressed an interest in sponsoring an expedition within the next eighteen months. In return they hope to get a film. The funds are at present unspecified, but it seems to be large. Any member with an expedition projected who finds such sponsorship potentially attractive is asked to give details of his objective forthwith to the Hon. Secretary.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ ‘Analysis of income from lecture fees’, July 8, 1974, MHT, CBO/01/06/02/07.

⁷⁹ Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, (London: Abacus, 2009), 307.

⁸⁰ ‘Forthcoming events’ Alpine Club circular, April 1973, AC, AC Circulars 1969-74, 1922/ACTS43.

The publication of such an obvious commercial opportunity coming so soon after the Everest 1972 climb within Alpine Club materials was an important, if subtle, sign of growing acceptance and growing demand from backers to explore commercial opportunities presented by mountaineering.

Everest 1975

With the return expedition to Everest's south west face three years later, money was again at the forefront of planning. For some of the mountaineers involved, the work involved with the necessary fundraising was not a welcome prospect. After the stresses of the 1972 fundraising effort, Bonington was keen that "we must first find a single sponsor who could cover the cost... most of my energies [in 1972] had been spent in fund-raising instead of planning how best to climb the mountain"⁸¹ and his agent George Greenfield duly obliged. The use of agents was further evidence of the growing commercial pressures on climbing. Bonington had used Greenfield as an agent since the 1960s, when he explained to Haston "I've just got myself an agent. I'll get him to sound out publishers for a Scottish winter book – it'd be great doing one".⁸² As well as being involved in the Everest 1975 plans, Greenfield was still connected to the sport in the years that followed, including in relation to Haston's legacy after his death.⁸³ Bonington was not the only climber to use an agent in this way. On the Eiger Direct in 1965 it was noted that the German team "had a public relations manager at the Eiger's usual base camp".⁸⁴ In the 1990s, elite climber Alison Hargreaves (discussed further in Chapter Four) worked with an agent – Richard Allen – to put promotional materials together and seek corporate sponsorship and a book deal.⁸⁵ Other expeditions employed people involved in publicity consultancy, including the AMA

⁸¹ Chris Bonington, *Everest the Hard Way*, (London: Arrow Books, 1977), 28.

⁸² Letter from Chris Bonington to Dougal Haston, August 17, 1966, MHT, CBO/04/03/01b.

⁸³ In a letter from Greenfield, he explained "I can quite easily put a modest valuation on Dougal's book copyrights but he has so many other merchandising and sponsorship contracts – apart from the future of the school". Letter from George Greenfield to Chris Bonington, February 7, 1977, MHT, CBO/04/03/01b.

⁸⁴ Connor, *The Philosophy of Risk*, 96.

⁸⁵ David Rose and Ed Douglas, *Regions of the Heart*, (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 210.

whose publicity agent was tasked with “seeking support from industry”,⁸⁶ and later on with Stephen Venables.⁸⁷

After Greenfield had approached a director at Barclays, Alan Tritton, who was also a mutual friend, the bank agreed to back the expedition despite the high costs.⁸⁸ Indeed, their backing would eventually cost some £141,000, but in exchange the Bank retained control of the onward commercialisation of the expedition including newspaper rights deals and lecture tours, as well as receiving sizable visibility and brand association through the climb.⁸⁹ This sum was substantial enough that it would leave the bank with no money left for other sponsorship in the year,⁹⁰ and it dwarfed the £4,000 that the bank put into another adventure expedition for a Zaire River expedition.⁹¹ The bank and the climbers and other members of the climbing community formed a committee to oversee preparations and financial arrangements.

The brand image that would come from the expedition was very important for the bank and was perhaps the main reason Barclays chose to sponsor this rather than the 1975 Cricket World Cup, which was also being considered.⁹² Indeed, the bank was seeking to expand internationally and they recognised that “A new route up Everest has an emotive appeal around the world for mountaineers but also a wide audience”.⁹³ Further, the bank perhaps hoped that the climb would deflect some of

⁸⁶ Fleming and Faux, *Soldiers on Everest*, 205.

⁸⁷ Who explained how one Wendy Davis was employed to handle PR, and that “She had been instructed to sell the expedition as: ‘The first alpine-style ascent of Everest’s East Face without oxygen”. Stephen Venables, *Everest: Kangshung Face*, (London: Pan, 1991), 21.

⁸⁸ Bonington, *Everest the Hard Way*, 33.

⁸⁹ ‘Evaluation of Barclays Bank International’s Sponsorship of the 1975 British Everest Expedition’, enclosed in letter from J. P. Bowden to Alan Tritton, September 13, 1976, MHT, ATR/2/3.

⁹⁰ ‘International Money Book Minutes’, July 29, 1974, Barclays Group Archives (hereafter BGA), Chairman’s Copy – Letter Book, 80/3121.

⁹¹ ‘Money Book Decisions – Zaire River Expedition’, May 15, 1975, BGA, Money Book Decisions, 80/5220.

⁹² ‘International Money Book Minutes’, June 10, 1974, BGA, Chairman’s Copy – Letter Book, 80/3120.

⁹³ J.P. Bowden, ‘British Everest Expedition’, July 19, 1974, BGA, Money Book Decisions, 80/5216.

the attention it was receiving as the focal point for growing anti-apartheid protests that created a “public relations minefield” and which dominated the banks AGM’s at the time.⁹⁴

There were potential concerns too about the mountaineering world being associated with a bank that was the focus of such attention. However, climbers were only beginning to adapt to the difficult world of sponsorship. The 1972 expedition included tobacco sponsorship despite it initially being objected to, and this weighed heavily on some. Lord Hunt who served on the Barclays-backed expedition committee explained how grateful he was that the sponsors “did not have to be Coca Cola, or Gallaghers”. He went on to also cite the *Daily Express*, perhaps revealing a continued attitude towards certain parts of the press that saw *The Times* back the 1953 Everest expedition over other, more lucrative, but less respectable, options.⁹⁵ The ready acceptance of Barclays, despite being at the centre of controversial protests, suggested that there was still a degree of immaturity in how sponsorship was being looked upon.

Barclay’s publicity efforts did not start well, however. From 1973, Britain’s economic situation was deteriorating and the public were feeling the consequences with strict bank lending and other financial worries.⁹⁶ In the eyes of one commentator:

The full enormity of Barclays’ financial risk becomes apparent when you see the same institution that is so reluctant to lend a customer just a few hundred pounds against the ample

⁹⁴ Nerys John, ‘The Campaign Against British Bank Involvement in Apartheid South Africa’, *African Affairs* 99 (2000): 419, 432.

⁹⁵ Letter from Lord John Hunt to Chris Bonington, August 14, 1974, MHT, CBO/01/08/01/02.

⁹⁶ Charles Feinstein, ‘Success and Failure: British Economic Growth since 1948’, in Roderick Floud and Deidre McCloskey, eds., *The Economic History of Britain since 1700: Volume 3 1939-1992*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 97-9; Sir Alexander Cairncross, ‘Economic Policy and Performance, 1964-1990’, in Floud and McCloskey, *The Economic History of Britain*, 70-1.

security of his freehold house, calmly handing out a hundred and fifty thousand pounds, completely unsecured, for a madcap scheme.⁹⁷

The bank was conscious of this attitude as Barclay's Chairman, Anthony Tuke, explained when the expedition was announced. Tuke noted that "This is a national undertaking ranking in stature with the Transatlantic and Polar expeditions in which the whole country can take an interest... I hope there will always be room for adventure and enterprise even when, as now, we are having to tighten our belts".⁹⁸ Other bank officials held a similar line. Richard Dyson, deputy chair at Barclays Bank International said in a press release that:

It would be a pity if City institutions were to be regarded as simply money making bodies with no thought except for maximum profits. There are other things in life and one of them which particularly appeals to the imagination and arouses our admiration is the triumph of human endeavour and the spirit of adventure over physical risk and difficulty. Mountaineering exemplifies this perhaps better than anything.⁹⁹

Bonington echoed these sentiments, explaining how mountaineering can be good for the country in the same way as World Cup victory could have a positive effect.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless there were a large number of complaints that took the bank by surprise, although the newspaper coverage was less critical and eventually attitudes towards the climb improved, helping to make the venture a commercially successful one for Barclays.¹⁰¹

The remarks from Tuke confirm that mountaineering remained an activity of national importance. The connections that were made between the sport and national identity were considerable and, as

⁹⁷ Michael Thompson, 'Aesthetics of Risk: Culture or Context', in Richard C. Schwing and Walter A. Albers Jr, eds., *Societal Risk Assessment: How Safe Is Safe Enough?*, (New York: Plenum Publishing, 1980), 276.

⁹⁸ 'Barclays Sponsorship of British Everest Expedition: Opening Remarks', undated, MHT, CB0/01/08/06/01.

⁹⁹ British Everest Expedition 1975 press release, 'Everest climbers leave for Nepal', July 28, 1975, MHT, ATR/10.

¹⁰⁰ 'Information – Everest: The South-West Face Problem', *Mountain* 41 (1975), 9.

¹⁰¹ Alan Tritton, *The Half-Closed Door*, (Sussex: Book Guild Publishing, 2008), 285.

discussed in the previous chapter, seemingly irreversible following the first ascent of Everest by a British expedition. This success retained the invented tradition of British climbing expeditions being for the good of the nation, hence ongoing newspaper interest of 'national' climbs. As noted before, this was less of a motivation for climbers themselves, but the connections were not lost on them. As Pete Boardman remarked in relation to the Everest 1975 climb – specifically the organisation of the trek in to the mountain – “For a mountaineer surely a Bonington Everest Expedition is one of the last great imperial experiences that life can offer”.¹⁰² Thus, expeditions such as these maintained the image established twenty years before, and used it to their advantage through their pursuit of sponsors and securing widespread coverage in the national media.

To sponsors, film and television remained important following the successes of televised rock climbing in the previous era. Improved photographic and film technology was used to make the sport more understandable to the general public and for high altitude climbing it meant that imagery and footage could be shot that showed the reality of these climbs. With the rights to the expedition secured, Barclays set about not only maximising their recognition as a sponsor, but also to recoup some of their investment particularly through these avenues. Television coverage was central to their commercial plans, having recognised how this had a “very good publicity effect on the eventual documentary programme and also on book sales” on earlier expeditions.¹⁰³

The documentary that followed the Everest 1975 climb was aired on the BBC on December 17th, 1975. According to a BBC ‘Audience Research Report’ it was watched by almost 16% of the population, and positively received.¹⁰⁴ Important for Barclays, their role was noted in the opening and the closing credits, to the soundtrack of Mike Oldfield’s *Hergest Ridge*.¹⁰⁵ Coupled with the fast-evolving magazines, festivals and other forms of climbing communications, the platform and the audience was

¹⁰² Bonington, *Everest the Hard Way*, 62.

¹⁰³ ‘British Everest Expedition 1975 Papers - Progress Report on Media Contracts’, November 4, 1974, MHT, ATR/1.

¹⁰⁴ ‘BBC ‘Audience Research Report’ on ‘Everest the Hard Way’’, January 6, 1976, MHT, ATR/2/1.

¹⁰⁵ *Everest the Hard Way*. Directed by Ned Kelly and Chris Ralling, BBC, 1975.

expanding and they wanted to capitalise on this. For Barclays in 1975 the televisual appeal was especially important in order to maximise their income. Climbing was not day to day viewing and, as Puchan has observed, crossed into the mainstream media "on special occasions, particularly when accidents or fatalities occur or when superlatives are involved" and this climb qualified as one of those occasions.¹⁰⁶ Anything that pushed the sport into popular viewing or readership was an advantage, although sponsors knew it was a transient interest that may or may not reach millions. The biggest financial success for Barclays was the post-expedition book. Written mostly by Bonington, *Everest the Hard Way* was published in early 1976 and generated over £26,000 in royalties in 1975-6 and a further £65,000 the following year.¹⁰⁷ Barclay's realised the importance of the book, and considered extending Bonington's life insurance until it was completed.¹⁰⁸

The expedition, where mainstream business and mountaineering were so substantially connected, proved to be a success on both fronts. Firstly, Dougal Haston and Doug Scott stood on the summit of Everest on September 24th after the team had for the first time scaled the difficult south-west face. Secondly, for Barclays the success was also considerable. Once all income had been maximised, the bank's net expenditure was under £20,000 for which they had generated publicity and brand awareness in Britain and across the globe, and benefitted from association with the successful summit.¹⁰⁹

The explicit association between the bank and expedition was an important moment in demonstrating the commercial appeal of the sport and acceptance of this within mountaineering. Although the 1960s had seen media backing, and the 1972 climb demonstrated the diversity of interested corporate

¹⁰⁶ Heike Puchan, 'Living "Extreme": Adventure Sports, Media and Commercialisation', *Journal of Communication Management* 9, no. 2 (2004), 176.

¹⁰⁷ 'Evaluation of Barclays Bank International's Sponsorship of the 1975 British Everest Expedition', enclosed in letter from J. P. Bowden to Alan Tritton, September 13, 1976, MHT, ATR/2/3.

¹⁰⁸ 'Note for Mr J P G Wathen, British Everest Expedition 1975', December 1, 1975, MHT, ATR/2/1.

¹⁰⁹ 'Evaluation of Barclays Bank International's Sponsorship of the 1975 British Everest Expedition', enclosed in letter from J. P. Bowden to Alan Tritton, September 13, 1976, MHT, ATR/2/3.

parties in mountaineering, after 1975 sponsorship was more commonplace and acceptable. The corporate engagement and dependence on sponsorship continued across several other high-profile Himalayan expeditions in the 1970s and early 1980s including efforts on K2, Nuptse and other routes on Everest. There were, though, other climbs that did not follow a similar pattern and which demonstrated how modernised mountaineering was continuing to evolve in this period.

The 1975 climbers benefitted considerably too. The reputations of Haston and Scott continued to rise, with their high altitude bivvy following the late summit becoming legendary. This provided a success and a story for them to capitalise on in the immediate aftermath and years after. Whilst these prominent climbers benefitted personally and financially from the new markets being created it was not the case for all. In some circumstances ability was less of a factor than fortune. Martin Boysen was perhaps the best example of an elite climber who was unable to earn substantially from the sport in the same way as others. Peter Gillman commented on the “bad luck” that affected Boysen’s climbing career, which was supported by some of his own reflections in a series of interviews.¹¹⁰ He regretted that that he was not involved in any of the televised climbs of the 1960s “which was disappointing because they seemed fairly lucrative”, going on to reflect that “I have never been pushed enough, I have never sought these things, and I think it is one of the lessons you learn”.¹¹¹

Boysen was in the Everest 1975 team, amongst the climbers working at the highest altitudes. He was in one of the main pairings with a chance of reaching the summit but after a fault with his equipment on summit day he was forced to turn back. This was a major disappointment for Boysen, but back home there were material consequences. Asked later “What did it mean to you in cash terms, your oxygen breaking down?”, Boysen explained that:

¹¹⁰ Gillman, *In Balance*, 32.

¹¹¹ ‘Martin Boysen: Crag Interview’, *Crag* 5 (1976), 19.

The public demands heroes, and you can't have 50 heroes – it is much easier to have one or two, and those are the people who got to the top. And so, from the hard financial aspect, it pays to get to the top. It is obviously a lot easier to get lectures if you got to the top. The difference between an oxygen valve working and not working is hard currency, but of course that isn't the thing which really matters.¹¹²

So it was that upon his return from the mountain he explained how he earned a living – "Well, for the moment I am your poor man's Bonington. I'm doing a bit of lecturing, a bit of writing, bit of interviewing, making the odd small amount of money, bit of teaching" – whilst also acknowledging that expeditioning creates domestic "financial problems".¹¹³ Boysen was certainly a talented climber but in spite of his climbing successes it was noted that he "typically... made no attempt to write up a description" of his efforts.¹¹⁴ Given that, as we have found, individuals had to be publicity-savvy to really succeed as a career climber, this attitude may have compromised the possibilities that presented themselves to Boysen in the 1970s.

In a possible hint towards trying to smooth things over after some disputes on Everest in 1975 and Boysen's bad fortune, Bonington wrote to Barclays in 1976 encouraging them to give a grant to a Boysen-led expedition to Trango Tower, explaining "They are having quite a tough time getting sponsorship not only for the expedition but also for the expedition film that they plan to make".¹¹⁵ This attempt to make amends was associated to differences of opinion on the mountain, and as we have already seen such conflicts were becoming a common pressure brought about by career climbing mindsets.

¹¹² 'Martin Boysen: Crag Interview, Part 2', *Crag* 6 (1977), 30.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹¹⁴ Trevor Jones and Geoff Milburn, *Welsh Rock*, (Glossop: Pic Publications, 1986), 241.

¹¹⁵ Letter from Chris Bonington to Alan Tritton, April 30, 1976, MHT, CBO/04/03/01a.

Whereas the pre-1969 era saw media as the main interested commercial party, the 1970s and early 1980s experienced a clear shift to the corporate world. Whilst media interest in the 1960s had evolved from historical interest in mountaineering – for instance with *The Times* and *The Guardian* – companies with no such past association were becoming the main funding source. This shift demonstrated not only the wider commercial opportunity in the sport that was only now being fully recognised, and reflected the acceptance that mountaineering could be used for more specific purposes, but also the changing commercial world looking to raise its presence, name recognition and the role of brand. Whilst *The Guardian* explained in relation to a later 1986 Bhutan expedition how sponsorship was important as a continuation of its recent involvement, many of these new commercial sponsors were using the sport for a specific purpose and often then swiftly ending their involvement in it.¹¹⁶ Such was the nature of new commercialisation in this era, there was less desire to become fully attached to the sport, but instead for business to use it – often temporarily – as they saw fit.

For instance, although Barclays found tremendous success sponsoring the 1975 Everest climb and described it as “most important we have ever undertaken”, they opted not to continue a substantial interest in the sport.¹¹⁷ On one hand the expedition had fulfilled Barclay’s requirements – considerable publicity and positive brand association. On the other hand, they saw it as a gamble and “speculation”, and felt that failure would have been very bad indeed.¹¹⁸ In their internal evaluation Barclays noted that “No form of sponsorship can be a totally safe way of obtaining publicity and goodwill for the Bank. The Everest Expedition was far riskier than most, but in our judgement was successful and the net

¹¹⁶ Doug Scott, ‘Bhutan – A Summary of Climbing and the Anglo-Indian Ascent of Jitchu Drake’, *Alpine Journal* 94 (1989-90), 39. For instance, Barclay’s did not retain a long term high profile, and the interest of companies such as British Caledonian was short lived.

¹¹⁷ ‘Barclays Sponsorship of British Everest Expedition: Opening Remarks’, undated, MHT, CB0/01/08/06/01.

¹¹⁸ Letter from A Tritton to J P Bowden, September 17, 1976, MHT, ATR/2/3.

financial outlay will be extremely small".¹¹⁹ LRC International's experience would likely echo these feelings whilst the involvement of sponsors on other climbs such as British Caledonian Airways (1979 expedition to Tierra Del Fuego) appears to also have been short-lived.¹²⁰

In some ways this did not cause a problem for mountaineers. Climbing's popularity as an advertising tool was also a reflection of the attitudes towards the sport across society. To be associated with it was to align a company with the image that climbing portrayed. This meant, for many, an association with excitement, Britishness, pioneering spirit, strength and courageousness, as well as, in some cases, association with iconic parts of the world that were understood on a global scale. Sponsorship of a football team or cricket event could generate a reasonably predictable return, be it in viewership, income or other forms of coverage. Climbing sponsorship was far less certain because the outcome was unpredictable, the potential downsides were extensive, and public interest was unknown. Sponsorship of the sport was a risk but so too was the pursuit for, as Bonington remarked in 1974 "Climbing is all about gambling. It's not about sure things".¹²¹

However, as well as advertising and recognition and brand association, sponsors often wanted more from their climbers and sponsors held some influence over climbs, both directly and indirectly. Entire expeditions and the people on them were increasingly subject to sponsors' influences in this era, which would set the scene for greater influence after 1985. The newer sponsors entering the sport facilitated expeditions, created earning potential and benefitted from the arrangement with climbers as much as the climbers themselves. However, with companies putting up sometimes substantial

¹¹⁹ 'Evaluation of Barclays Bank International's Sponsorship of the 1975 British Everest Expedition', enclosed in letter from J P Bowden to Alan Tritton, September 13, 1976, MHT, ATR/2/3.

¹²⁰ John Earle and I. M. Peters, 'Tierra del Fuego '79: Sponsored by British Caledonian Airways' Expedition Report, 1979, BMC ref ExpAc.

¹²¹ Chris Brasher, 'Now They Are Going to Try Again!', *Mountain Life* 16 (1974), 9-10.

funds on what was often regarded a 'gamble' it would be no surprise to find that they wielded some influence over the expeditions.

It was, for example, becoming more evident that some expedition members were selected with sponsor demands in mind. With respect to the Annapurna 1970 team selection, agent George Greenfield "canvassed for a leading American climber to be included, for considerations not far removed from the demands of sponsorship and selling the expedition book's US rights".¹²² Separately, when discussing his own withdrawal from a BBC Eiger project so that he could concentrate on preparations for the 1975 Everest expedition, Bonington explained how the BBC:

Won't be unduly unhappy if I withdraw since Alan Chivers, who is in charge of the project, had mentioned to me that he can afford to lose either Dougal or myself, and even in some ways would be quite pleased to do so as this would mean that he could bring in an American and therefore ensure that they had American coverage.¹²³

This eye to sponsor's demands was beginning to distort the way high profile expeditions were being structured.

Aside from personnel, there are other examples of direct influence on expeditions. For instance, Barclays requested that a member of their staff be involved in the wider expedition team on Everest in 1975, as well as having their own expectations about newspaper and TV reporting teams too. Similarly, on the international expedition of 1971 the BBC contributed some \$110,000 and as a result according to one commentator "insisted on adding seven climbers to the expedition".¹²⁴ However, in this expedition and in many others, it seemed the sponsors had little interest in dictating the climb itself, and climbers resisted the idea. With respect to the BBC's 1971 sponsorship, Don Whillans was

¹²² Connor, *The Philosophy of Risk*, 146.

¹²³ Letter Chris Bonington to John Hunt, October 8, 1974, MHT, CBO/01/08/01/02.

¹²⁴ Howard E McCurdy, 'The Economics of Innovation: Mountaineering and the American Space Program', May 2013, NASA, 23.

asked about his decision not to change route to the 'easier' south col option rather than to stay on the south west face. "One would have thought that the B.B.C. would have liked you to go for the summit" he was asked, replying that "No, they were always very keen on the Face. They weren't interested in simply repeating what was done perfectly well in 1953".¹²⁵ This was echoed by Rusty Baillie who explained that "I can appreciate that our sponsors may expect a route by any way, but hopefully we will not have to be ruled by them in mountaineering decisions". He went on to explain that they "resisted the temptation to try the easier way when the opportunity presented itself, preferring instead to strike a blow for mountaineering values against the hollow rewards of ill-informed public acclaim".¹²⁶ In 1975 there was no suggestion from the bank that certain high-altitude elite climbing individuals be included.¹²⁷ The distinction therefore was that they influence the climb more for coverage, but not try to interfere with tactical decisions on the mountain itself.

From the climbers' perspective there were concerns about excessive intrusion and even Bonington explained that if sponsors could dictate climbing approach and objectives "this could only lead to an erosion of mountaineering values".¹²⁸ In a later interview at the end of the 1980s he played this down somewhat explaining how "Once you are on a mountain I think the influence of sponsors vanishes fairly quickly as do most things except your personal ambition".¹²⁹ Doug Scott, however, suggested something slightly different, alluding to how commercial opportunity actually affected climbers explaining that if all commercial attention is on one member of the team it could have a "divisive

¹²⁵ 'Mountain interview: Don Whillans', *Mountain* 20 (1972), 27.

¹²⁶ Wilson and Pearson, 'Everest: Post-Mortem', 18.

¹²⁷ For example see 'Committee Meeting Minutes', September 26, 1974, MHT, CBO/01/08/01/01. An agenda item for this meeting related to team selection, with Bonington setting out his requirements of nine lead and eight support climbers "without having too many 'stars', all wanting to get to the top of the mountain, to the detriment of the Expedition as a whole". Other than the aforementioned Barclays employee who was part of the wider team, there is no suggestion in the minutes that Barclays requested certain elite climbers be involved.

¹²⁸ Barbara R. Johnston and Ted Edwards, 'The Commodification of Mountaineering', *Annals of Tourism Research* 21, no. 3 (1994), 466.

¹²⁹ 'Bonington: The Mountain Interview', *Mountain* 130 (1989), 30.

effect". Tellingly, he went on to note how media sponsorship and involvement had an influence, "especially when representatives of TV companies and newspapers are actually present on the expedition".¹³⁰ These comments may have reflected an alertness to the growing fascination towards human interest stories, or potential dramatisation of competition between climbers – such as in the coverage of the Eiger Direct outlined in the previous chapter – which was part of the evolution of the print media in particular.

Sponsors were vital for getting expeditions off the ground and influencing how this happened. They tended to have a presence on the mountain, but limited control over climbing decisions being made. This was a necessary, but uneasy arrangement. Whilst commercial pressures may not have directed specific climbing choices, the reliance on funding meant that expeditions that were already geared up to appeal to commercial parties were more likely to get off the ground in the first place. The need to draw in commercial backers increasingly meant that many elite mountaineers were increasingly factoring in commercial attractiveness to their expeditions. This was an entrepreneurial reaction to the changing opportunities by increasing the potential for expeditions to take place by making them attractive to potential corporate interests, as well as capitalising on the general growing interest in sports for sponsorship.¹³¹ Although Barclays Bank may not have influenced the route or the number of summit groupings, they were not keen to back just any expedition and rejected the opportunity to remain substantially involved in the sport after 1975. It was only the specific climb, objective, timing and personnel that attracted them to sponsor and this illustrates how the attitudes of potential backers was already influencing mountaineering ambitions. Seemingly, the attitudes of sponsors meant that they did influence the direction of mountaineering because the climbs themselves were beginning to be reengineered to provide potential backers what they desired – publicity, image and

¹³⁰ Doug Scott, 'The Himalaya and the Pace of Change', *Mountain* 111 (1986), 37.

¹³¹ CCPR, *The Howell Report*, 12.

advertising. Such influence was therefore a far cry from that observed at the other extreme, including sponsor influence over football team selection.¹³²

That said, it was not always straightforward for hopeful expeditions even if they attempted to match their ambitions to sponsor interests. Several struggled to get off the ground because they could not raise sufficient sponsorship or other funding, directly affecting those aspiring to be involved. A “British Garhwal Expedition” to climb Changabang in India in 1974 found it difficult to commence despite Bonington’s confidence.¹³³ He had told the MEF that “I am confident that the expedition should be able to get sufficient funds from the media to cover both its own costs and its commitment to the Indians” (this was a joint expedition).¹³⁴ However, privately he was less sure, telling Haston in January 1974 that “it is becoming increasingly obvious that it is not going to be easy to... raise the necessary funds from the media”.¹³⁵ This was likely a reflection that the mainstream media was less interested in this specific climb, as well as the growing number of expeditions that were seeking financial support. Given the relatively anonymous nature of the climb outside climbing circles it was also a reflection of why some expeditions found it more difficult to get backing than others. Bonington noted how these difficulties were “not for want of trying, but simply that the media market is beginning to dry up, both because of what I suspect is over-exposure of climbing in the media and, of course, the unfortunate economic climate”.¹³⁶ In spite of this, the climb did go ahead, and made a small profit.¹³⁷

Ultimately, the corporate success and wider demand for mountaineering activity led to some issues of over-supply. The AMA’s 1976 expedition to Everest followed on the heels of Bonington’s 1975

¹³² Adrian Budd, ‘Capitalism, Sport and Resistance: Reflections’, *Culture, Sport, Society* 4, no. 1 (2001), 9. Budd refers to the more recent example of the alleged inclusion of certain 1998 World Cup stars under pressure from sponsors.

¹³³ Changabang is under 7,000m high, but the dramatic appearance of the mountain made it particularly attractive to climb.

¹³⁴ Chris Bonington, ‘Indian-British Garhwal Expedition’ outline, undated, MHT, CBO/01/07/01.

¹³⁵ Letter from Chris Bonington to Dougal Haston, January 11, 1974, MHT, CBO/01/07/01.

¹³⁶ Letter from Chris Bonington to D. Edmundson, March 14, 1974, MHT, CBO/01/07/01.

¹³⁷ Letter from Chris Bonington to Dougal Haston July 20, 1975, MHT, CBO/01/07/02.

climb. Despite its name, it was not financially supported by the Army, and so needed to raise funds, estimated to be in the region of £60,000.¹³⁸ In doing so, the expedition leaders complained how the other high-profile expeditions were causing problems in raising funds:

Competition from a proliferation of expeditions, both Service and civilian... and the near saturation of the Press, television and publishing world with travel and adventure stories... did nothing to help our cause. Moreover, we were faced with specialised competition in the shape of the 1975 British Everest Expedition whose well-deserved success only months before our own departure effectively stifled any hope of really remunerative contracts with the media.¹³⁹

This situation of a rising number of expeditions, many of which included a commercial angle, would have been difficult to imagine a decade earlier. British climbs, capitalising on the presence and success already achieved, helped initiate this change in the earlier part of the 1970s. Considering an international perspective, Hawley and Salisbury's analysis explains that from 1978 "climbing activity [in the Nepal Himalaya] nearly quadrupled in the span of four years" on Everest alone, a pattern repeated elsewhere in the region.¹⁴⁰ Evidently a major change was underway, one which would continue into the 1980s and beyond.

Kongur 1981

In the early 1980s mountaineering opportunities in China opened up and elite climbers were keen to seek out new challenges and exciting peaks. Among the earliest objectives of particular interest was Mount Kongur, standing some 7,700m. Although a somewhat peculiar climb and one that was far more niche than the Everest, Annapurna and K2 extravaganzas that had preceded it, and perhaps

¹³⁸ Although it did use Army transport to save on freight costs.

¹³⁹ Fleming and Faux, *Soldiers on Everest*, 199.

¹⁴⁰ Richard Salisbury, Elizabeth Hawley, *Himalaya By Numbers: A Statistical Analysis of Mountaineering in the Nepal Himalaya*, 2007, no publisher, 11; 26-28, online <http://www.himalayadatabase.com/downloads/HimalayaByNbrs.pdf> (accessed January 17, 2018).

unrecognisable to the public, an expedition to the mountain was still able to draw in sponsorship. Al Rouse, Bonington and Mike Ward travelled to the peak in 1980 for a reconnaissance. This was followed the next year by a full climbing expedition which also included Pete Boardman and Joe Tasker, and carried with it sizable funding requirements.¹⁴¹ Al Rouse was born in 1951 just two years before Everest was first climbed. He was a keen chess player, and studied mathematics at Cambridge University on a scholarship. From a young age he climbed in Britain establishing very technical routes primarily in North Wales, and became president of Cambridge University climbing club. Prior to Kongur, Rouse began to climb in the Alps and in other ranges, proving himself as a highly competent mountaineer.¹⁴²

Following success on Everest, sponsorship was becoming more diverse. For instance, as well as Barclays, Kodak, and LRC, other sponsorship came from the likes of British Caledonian Airways,¹⁴³ and glass manufacturer Pilkington who sponsored an Everest expedition in 1985.¹⁴⁴ Although speaking specifically about breweries, Collins and Vamplew's conclusion was that for many companies, "Part of the appeal of sports sponsorship was that it allowed [a company] to reap the benefits of a close identification with a club or sport without any of the attendant risks associated with holding shares or other financial commitments in a club".¹⁴⁵ Certainly this was true, but mountaineering had a very specific image and appeal. In some cases, there were more niche interests of sponsors which mountaineering was unique in being able to appeal to.

For the Kongur expedition in 1981 it was trading house Jardine, Matheson and Co which was the main sponsor of the climb, continuing the varied corporations who wanted to be involved with the sport.

¹⁴¹ Chris Bonington, 'Up the Kongur and Round the Karun Koh', in Geoff Birtles, ed., *Alan Rouse: A Mountaineer's Life*, (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1988), 175.

¹⁴² Anita McConnell, 'Rouse, Alan Paul (1951-1986), mountaineer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/62502> (accessed July 27, 2013).

¹⁴³ Earle and Peters, 'Tierra del Fuego '79'.

¹⁴⁴ Letter from Mal Duff to Tom Tasker, February 19, 1985, letterhead reads 'Pilkington Everest Expedition', MHT, TAS 3.

¹⁴⁵ Collins and Vamplew, *Mud, Sweat and Beers*, 64.

Being amongst the first expeditions into China the climb was certainly unique, but it was not headline-grabbing and so the sponsorship was likely for more specific reasons than simply to maximise brand exposure. Indeed, the in-house magazine for Jardine's called *Thistle* explained in this case how:

We believe that this expedition represents a new and challenging chapter in mountaineering and exploration. Supporting this exciting project seems to us an ideal opportunity to underline Jardines' long-standing commitment to friendly relations between China, Hong Kong and Britain.¹⁴⁶

Further, their role extended beyond sponsorship whereby they were "also closely involved in the preparation and running of the expedition",¹⁴⁷ all of which ensured they were clearly listed as sponsor in the expeditions pre-climb materials aimed at securing the interest of the press.¹⁴⁸

For Al Rouse, the Kongur expeditions were especially important. Widely regarded as one of Britain's foremost rock climbers and mountaineers, he had struggled to be able to combine his climbing ethics with his career expectations. Bonington had described him such that "his commitment to climbing had stopped him following a conventional career and, like me, he was making a living from a combination of lecturing, writing and working with equipment manufacturers".¹⁴⁹ At the same time however, he had been described as an amateur in his ethical approach to climbing, with his friend Rab Carrington describing him as a "romantic climber".¹⁵⁰ In spite of such an attitude, which would ordinarily eschew any attempts to earn an income from the sport, he was writing, lecturing and acting as "a consultant to the suppliers of mountain clothing and equipment".¹⁵¹ Jim Curran, who wrote about Rouse in

¹⁴⁶ 'Jardines Sponsor Assault on China's Mt Kongur', *Thistle*, 1980, 3, MHT, TAS 2.

¹⁴⁷ 'The British Mount Kongur Expedition to China' brochure, 1981, NLS, HP3.204.1942.

¹⁴⁸ 'The British Mount Kongur Expedition to China', Alan Rouse Library, 756E.

¹⁴⁹ Bonington, *The Everest Years*, 564.

¹⁵⁰ David Bocking, 'Rab Still Relishing the Heights of Ambition', *Sheffield Telegraph*, September 3, 2003.

¹⁵¹ Anita McConnell, 'Rouse, Alan Paul (1951-1986), mountaineer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/62502> (accessed July 27, 2013).

relation to a 1986 K2 expedition, explained that maintaining a life as a “climber, writer, committee-man, Vice-President of the British Mountaineering Club, lecturer and gentleman of leisure” was a “balancing act” but although he earned directly from mountaineering, it was not necessarily the route he wished to pursue. Instead it was a means to an end that allowed him to spend time in these environments.¹⁵²

Rouse’s two parts – the gentleman, amateur, romantic and the career climbing, publicity seeker – were not particularly compatible, and reflected the wider tensions at the time of amateurism and individualism. However, this distinction of what it was to be an amateur or a professional was blurring very rapidly. As such, Rouse himself was a microcosm of the issue at play in wider mountaineering incorporating the struggles between these two attitudes, but also an acceptance of the inevitability and upsides of professional attitudes that one may as well benefit from if possible.

The reliance on overt sponsorship for the Mount Kongur climb, which the team successfully summited, was very different from Rouse’s small party ascent of Jannu just two years earlier, and others that he had been involved in. The Jannu expedition report shows that only a fraction of the income was raised commercially, with Bass Charington the largest backer at just £200, whilst the four members themselves contributed £4,000.¹⁵³ This may have been by necessity however. Niche climbs such as this lacked headline grabbing potential which led the Jannu expedition members to reflect that “British mountaineers now occupy an eminent position in the field of world mountaineering and yet it is still very difficult for expeditions to raise an appreciable proportion of their expenses”.¹⁵⁴ Despite Rouse not leading the expedition, Jardine’s backing had been a major shift for him and the type of climb he was involved in, and could have played against his ethical stance. Jim Curran’s obituary of Rouse, who

¹⁵² Jim Curran, *K2: Triumph and Tragedy*, (London: Grafton Books, 1989), 22.

¹⁵³ ‘The British Jannu Expedition 1978’, 1978, Alan Rouse Library, R626E, 11.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

died in 1986, declared that the Kongur expeditions “showed Al’s acceptance into ‘The Establishment’”.¹⁵⁵

Rouse was certainly not the only climber who could be charged with some degree of artificiality in forgoing his amateur roots. After 1985, the opinions of Doug Scott showed the turmoil of operating in an ethical way but also earning a living. Joe Tasker, Pete Boardman, Dougal Haston and others also struggled at different times with synchronising these competing pressures. Even abroad it has been pointed out how American-based Yvon Choinard, who criticised how new equipment helped climbers achieve ascents beyond their actual ability, was actually making and selling such equipment himself.¹⁵⁶ However, for the highly-regarded and widely-known Rouse to find an agreeable way of merging his ethics and career aspirations with growing commercial dependence, while avoiding some of the controversies that surrounded others who made similar transitions in other sports, was a sign of the gradually transforming attitudes in mountaineering.¹⁵⁷

Perhaps the best option for many progressive climbers who sought to maximise the aesthetic of a climb and experience it as purely as possible, was to adopt an alpine style of climbing. Viewed as a more ethical and fair approach, this style saw each individual intending to succeed, committing themselves entirely to the mountain and the goal, typically moving in a continuous route without fixed camps. It had the advantage of being cheaper, though this did not negate the need for funding, particularly in areas where permits were relatively expensive.

Pursuing this style of climb, even if doing so in a commercially motivated expedition, at least provided some separation from old norms for those concerned about their ethical appearance. The changing perspective of the likes of Rouse, and the climbing community more generally led to the demise of the

¹⁵⁵ Rab Carrington and Jim Curran, ‘Alan Rouse: 1979-1986’, *Climbers’ Club Journal*, (1986-7), 117.

¹⁵⁶ Joseph E. Taylor III, ‘On Climber, Granite, Sky’, *Environmental History* 11, no. 1 (2006), 133.

¹⁵⁷ Related controversies existed in skateboarding for instance. Sean Dinces, ‘“Flexible Opposition”: Skateboarding Subcultures Under the Rubric of Late Capitalism’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 11 (2011), 1512–1535.

siege style expedition towards the end of the 1970s. To climb in this manner became increasingly objectionable. The shift took with it one of the other more 'traditional' climbing roles – that of expedition leader. The MEC's organised attempts on Everest from the 1920s through to the 1950s placed great emphasis on the leader of an expedition, and the bigger commercial expeditions under Bonington's leadership also made much of this role. As Budd has mentioned, captains in team sports represented a continuation of an amateur ethos, the "gentleman... who could keep their subordinates in their place".¹⁵⁸ These earlier expedition leaders could be seen in this light too, but with the gradual shift towards alpine style climbing in even commercial expeditions as well as the greater individualism it heralded, this iconic role, steeped in how the sport used to be organised, was becoming a thing of the past. Alpine style climbing proved to be significant in the ascent of Shishapangma, which confirmed the changing *modus operandi* in response to the views of the climbing community.

Shishapangma, 1982

As the Kongur expedition had found, it was expensive to climb in China. Costs were up to eight times as much as in Nepal as the Chinese were increasingly "regarding expeditions as a big source of foreign currency".¹⁵⁹ The expedition to Shishapangma, an 8,027m peak in Tibet, was an alpine style climb with just four climbing members and minimal equipment. Despite being considerably smaller than other high-profile expeditions of the era, the estimated costs were still in the region of £30,000 and even after grants were received from the MEF and BMC, and individual contributions had been made to the amount of £5,000, there was a large gap to fill. The climbing team included Doug Scott and Alex MacIntyre, and they remarked how the mountain was "relatively unknown to the public, but it has

¹⁵⁸ Budd, 'Capitalism, Sport and Resistance', 6. See also Ellis Cashmore, *Making Sense of Sport*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 59; Jennifer Hargreaves, 'Sport, Culture and Ideology', in Jennifer Hargreaves, ed., *Sport, Culture and Ideology*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 41.

¹⁵⁹ 'British Xixabangma Expedition: April May and June 1982', 1982, Alan Rouse Library, R672E, 3.

fascinated Himalayan climbers for many years.... We count ourselves lucky to have permission, and to have the first opportunity to climb the spectacular south face".¹⁶⁰

Scott had found prominence and opportunity from climbing particularly through lecturing, especially following his first British ascent of Everest in 1975. Indeed, even before success on Everest he was part of the lecture circuit.¹⁶¹ The year after the Shishapangma climb, Scott was headlining one of the new events that supported communications and opportunities for career climbers – a mountain film festival. Mountain film festivals arose out of growing economic influences and associated new commercial norms. Festival events deliberately showcased climbing, be it in lecture or film format, to a wide audience and demonstrated the broadening appeal of climbing. The fact that such events became popular was a clear sign that the sport was continuing its transition away from its old sub-culture and intentionally into the mainstream by providing entertainment to not only the climbing community, but also the enthusiast or those with a passing interest. For the attendees, this presented the opportunity to listen to mountaineers like Scott lecture about their exploits, or watch a film which demonstrated them. This, combined with a prominent social scene, attracted audiences, and sponsors followed, while for the mountaineers themselves money could be made by being on the event programme. Lecturing at such events to a captive audience would add further dates to an already profitable side-line in the winter months, and the all-important exposure would raise their appeal with actual or potential sponsors.

The launch in 1980 of the Kendal film festival was preceded by some years of organised meetings with lectures run by the BMC in the 1970s, but Kendal was the first festival with a wider and less formal remit.¹⁶² Prior to the 1980 festival, Tony Riley published a *Mountain* article explaining his experience

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 2, 6.

¹⁶¹ Clipping 'Everest Man Coming – But He Can't Talk About Epic Climb', *Walsall Observer*, November 11, 1975, MHT, ATR/3/2.

¹⁶² Audrey Salkeld, 'The Buxton Conferences', in Geoff Milburn and Ken Wilson, eds., *The First Fifty Years of the British Mountaineering Council*, (Manchester: British Mountaineering Council, 1997), 213.

at a new Telluride festival in America. He explained the range of films that were on offer, but interestingly spoke very little other than of the films themselves. He did note that “one of the most impressive aspects of the festival was the degree to which audiences, organisers and film makers mixed and joined in the event”, explaining how occasions such as this would “hopefully... help film makers raise finance, if only by promoting interest, a demand for new material and an increased popularity of mountain film in cinema and television outlets”.¹⁶³ Perhaps most interesting though is a following issue of *Mountain*. Riley’s article had evidently created interest and enquiry amongst readers. With little opportunity to see such films in Britain, or meet in such an organised manner, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that Riley later noted that there were “several queries” about his article.¹⁶⁴ This demonstrated the initial interest in mountain film and probably contributed to the launch of Britain’s best-known mountain film festival in Kendal.

The first Kendal Mountain Film Festival was held 17th-18th October 1980. Oddly, there was little publicity in the mountaineering press for the event and one gets the impression that this original setup was rather rushed. A small advert in the pages of *Mountain* was about the extent of the coverage it received, with no letters or editorials in the magazine prior to or immediately after the event (Figure 4).¹⁶⁵ There was though some local publicity raised, with a feature in the regional *Westmorland Gazette* advising local readers about the size and scope of the event.¹⁶⁶ The festival advert already suggested that

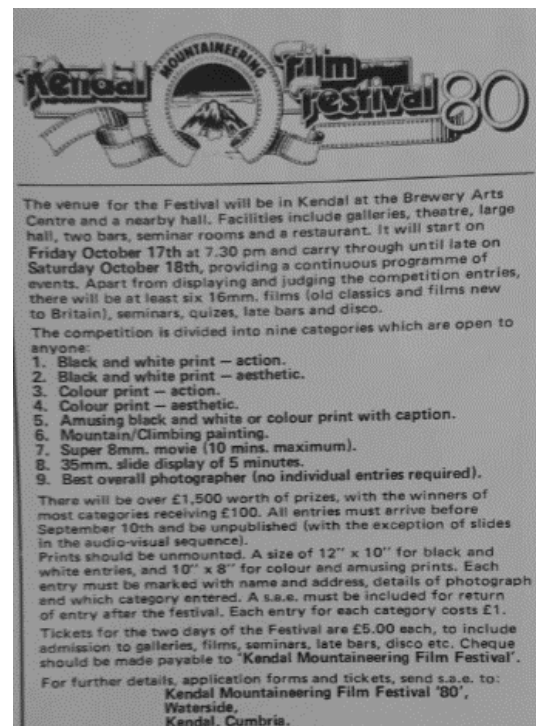


Figure 4 - Kendal Mountaineering Film Festival advert in *Mountain*, 1980

¹⁶³ Tony Riley, 'Films', *Mountain* 74 (1980), 51-52.

¹⁶⁴ Tony Riley, 'Telluride Film Festival', *Mountain* 72 (1980), 48.

¹⁶⁵ See advert *Mountain* 73 (1980), 62.

¹⁶⁶ 'Mountaineering Spectacular...', *The Westmorland Gazette*, October 10, 1980.

interest was beyond just film, with “seminars” amongst the attractions and numerous competitions categories for photography.¹⁶⁷ The 1980 festival programme opened with the following explanation:

May we take this opportunity and welcome you to the festival. This annual non-profit making festival provides an arena for mountain photographers, film makers and painters to display their works, be judged on merit and awarded prizes... Apart from the competition, the festival programme is designed to entertain the climber and photographer alike.¹⁶⁸

Interestingly, the programme suggested it was a sponsored event, citing four major sponsors all in the field (Karrimor, *Climber & Rambler* magazine, Europa Sport and Waterside Adventure Sports), and five minor sponsors.¹⁶⁹ With such a gathering of parties at Kendal in 1980, and interest from sponsors, it did not take long for elite mountaineers to recognise that lecturing could form part of the programme. With lecturing known to be a good earner for elite communicator climbers, and with the ideal audience in place, such sessions at Kendal soon became popular.

The 1980 Kendal event was followed with other festivals in 1983 and 1985, and other locations such as Dundee also hosted similar events.¹⁷⁰ The 1983 Kendal festival was notable because on the programme was Doug Scott’s primetime “autobiographical, illustrated lecture by Britain’s foremost mountaineer”.¹⁷¹ This is early evidence that career mountaineers could capitalise on the captive festival audience by speaking about their most recent climbs, such as Scott’s on Shishapangma.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Se advert in *Mountain* 73 (1980), 62.

¹⁶⁸ 'Kendal Mountain Film Festival '80 programme', MHT, un-catalogued, accession number 2007/7, folder 4, ASA.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ 'Dundee Mountain Film Festival programme', November 12, 1983 attached to letter from J.W. Burdin to Audrey Salkeld, May 17, 1984, MHT, un-catalogued, accession number 2007/7, folder 4, ASA.

¹⁷¹ 'Kendal '83 programme', MHT, un-catalogued, accession number 2007/7, folder 4, ASA.

¹⁷² 'Buxton 1984', *High* 18 (1984), 3.

Financially, however, these early festivals struggled in terms of balancing the books. Despite over 1,000 people attending the third Kendal film festival in 1985, financial pressures and “the lack of local support” were creating difficulties for the organisers and the events ceased. This was more problematic than sponsorship, with one of the organisers, John Porter, noting that “holding the event in a city could be the only solution to financial problems”.¹⁷³ Putting this into perspective, the seventh Banff festival had some 3,000 attendees.¹⁷⁴ However, the Kendal film festival was not permanently over, and in 1999 it resumed, headed by the same organising trio (Porter, alongside Jim Curran and Brian Hall) as originally.¹⁷⁵ In 2001 Doug Scott was again amongst the headline speakers. Attendances of up to 1,000 may not have been particularly substantial, but it was what they represented for climbers themselves, sponsors and film makers that was especially important. Therefore, these events were a sign of the rising appeal of climbing, the broadening media into which it played and its deliberate pursuit of mainstream interest.

While Scott could gain high prominence at Kendal following the 1982 Shishapangma climb, there had been more material problems in even getting the expedition off the ground. Pre-expedition estimates noted that the climb would be expensive. Alongside grants, personal contributions and individual sponsorships totalling £9,500, it was anticipated that a further £15,975 would be needed in the form of “major sponsorship”.¹⁷⁶ It was left until very late in the day before the expedition funds were finally secured and the members avoided “the nightmare thought of driving back up the motorway with a car-load of gear to return”.¹⁷⁷ In the end, last minute arrangements came to fruition and the climb was

¹⁷³ 'Mountain Event may be Moved', *The Westmorland Gazette*, March 8, 1985.

¹⁷⁴ 'Seventh Annual Banff Festival of Films', 1982, MHT, un-catalogued, accession number 2007/7, folder 4, ASA.

¹⁷⁵ Colin Wells, *Who's Who in British Climbing*, (Buxton: The Climbing Company Ltd, 2008), 373; Sarah Clough, Kevin Avery, Alan James and Mick Ryan, 'Kendal Mountain Festival Report', UK Climbing website, December 2008, online <http://www.ukclimbing.com/articles/page.php?id=1523> (accessed June 24, 2017).

¹⁷⁶ *British Xixabangma Expedition: April May and June 1982*, 1982, Alan Rouse Library, R672E, 6.

¹⁷⁷ Doug Scott and Alex MacIntyre, *Shisha Pangma: The Alpine-Style Ascent of the South-West Face*, (Leicester, Baton Wicks, 2000), 35.

in part funded by articles in the *Illustrated London News*, articles for *Doctor* magazine and grants of more than £2,000 from the MEF and the BMC.¹⁷⁸

A contract for a book, which Scott co-authored, also contributed to the funds. Such publications were an important part of the portfolio of options available to elite climbers. Given the prominence of climbing accounts dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, these materials continued as a part of the tradition of the sport despite the upheaval underway. The publication of biographies and autobiographies from a range of climbers indicated the role these books played, and writing for climbing magazines was especially important for the likes of Rouse and Scott. Climbers such as Tasker and Boardman relied heavily on literature to pay their way as climbers as they preferred to avoid siege style or substantially sponsored climbs, leaving few other options. At the end of the 1970s, Mike Richardson noted how expedition books were regularly being released and explained that “reasons for doing so are that commercial enterprise demands it, nationalistic pride demands it, the general public like an adventure story and professional climbers have to make a living”.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, so common and important was climbing literature that a specific festival was set up in the late 1980s – first hosted at Bretton Hall College in Wakefield¹⁸⁰ – to celebrate it, attracting an audience of over 100 by 1989.¹⁸¹ Following the deaths of Joe Tasker and Pete Boardman on Everest in 1982, a book award named after them has been given annually – the Boardman-Tasker Prize.

This experience was just the beginning of a change in approach by Scott and those who did not wish overt sponsorship to play a role in the sport, but recognised that compromises needed to be made even in climbs that were lightweight and more in keeping with the expectations of the more ethical parts of the climbing community. Being seen to pursue a lightweight option was what made the commercial overtones more palatable. However, Scott was not alone. Indeed, despite the growing

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 33-35.

¹⁷⁹ M. Richardson., 'Reviews', *Crags* 20 (1979), 34.

¹⁸⁰ 'A Festival of Mountaineering Literature' press release, October 10, 1987, MHT, FML/2/1.

¹⁸¹ Letter from Terry Gifford to Chris Bonington, December 5, 1989, MHT, FML/2/4.

economic connections, amateur influences still carried some weight within the small number of elite climbers. Even in the 1971 international expedition on Everest when Don Whillans and Dougal Haston found a route off the South West Face onto the South Face which might have proved an easier way to the summit – *Mountain* reported:

Should they quit the Face and try to clinch a success by this route? Whillans considered the idea from his airy viewpoint, but decided against it. After all the arguments of the previous weeks, he felt that such an action would leave himself and Haston open to hypocrisy.¹⁸²

The choice of route was also important for the climbers' image, as was the type of climb, in both 1982 and on other expeditions. The emerging negative reactions to extensive expedition backing, plentiful provisions, and siege-style climbs placed the image of some elite mountaineers on such climbs at risk. Their reputations as genuinely elite and accomplished climbers were vital since they were relying on their image for their career; for instance Chris Bonington as a rugged, decision-making expedition leader and Dougal Haston, whose image was central to the running of ISM. Indeed, Haston's profile was sufficiently high that he was offered a role for Thomas Cook to guide treks in the Garwal Himalaya in 1976 that he turned down.¹⁸³ The decisions made by climbers with respect to expeditions in this and other periods had factored in their portrayal and the affect this might have on their career opportunity, and Scott may have been mindful of this in 1982.

Masculine imagery was an aspect of this, though it appeared to be of less concern from the more commercial angle. While the climbers may have wished to promote their ruggedness and leadership qualities amongst their peers, the corporations that backed these expeditions may have been less concerned by such factors. Product endorsements using sportsmen from more mainstream sport could require a certain type of male imagery. But these climbers were endorsing Bovril rather than

¹⁸² Wilson and Parson, 'Everest: Post-Mortem', 26.

¹⁸³ Connor, *Philosophy of Risk*, 192.

Brylcreem, and masculinity seemed to be of less relevance for the likes of Barclays. That said, some of the “codes of masculine adventure”, as noted by Bayers regarding Everest 1953, did apply.¹⁸⁴ Bayers’ cited endurance, leadership and courage amongst the characteristics that would play into this model, and these were important for the climbs of that era. However, by comparison their prominence within the coverage of the 1975 climb, and the commercialisation of it, was less significant. Masculine imagery had become a consequence of climbing, but it was not one which was actively promoted, and its role was to decline further. As Bayers’ went on to remark, the advent of client climbers in the later 1980s (covered in the next chapter) saw “masculinity [as] no longer construed as ‘naturally virile’, nor is it particularly heroic”.¹⁸⁵

Scott and Rouse erred on the more cautious side, preferring to avoid commercial overtones where possible, though their ethical stance was compromised by the attractiveness of a climbing career. So blurred was the line between amateur ethics and more professionally minded approaches that as well as instances of the grey-area that Scott and Rouse occupied, there were other accounts of clearer contradictions. In his analysis of changing imagery in mountaineering publications, Taylor observed in America that participants in the sport were harking back to earlier values and ethos, but not practising it themselves, an attitude equally applicable in Britain. Taylor remarked:

Most contributors idealized pure experience, a vestige of nineteenth century Victorian amateurism, yet in practice many were professionals. Their philosophy echoes adventurers who celebrated mountains as liberation from effeminizing modernity, but their behaviour revealed that climbing was no longer play.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Peter L. Bayers, *Imperial Ascent: Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire*, (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 101.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁸⁶ Taylor, 'Climber, Granite, Sky', 133.

Scott and Rouse could be accused of the same traits. Whilst Scott tried to remain reserved in his outward approach, particularly upholding the ethics of the sport, he was prepared to forgo his worries to fund a potential 1986 expedition to the newly opened, and extremely expensive, Bhutan (detailed in the next chapter). He told the *Guardian* that “I’ve never had a sponsor for the expeditions I’ve organised but this time the costs really are high”.¹⁸⁷ Clearly money could affect ethical worries and this was the latest compromise in a debate that had taken place over the previous decade amongst the wider community of climbers.

Operating In, and Reaction to a New Commercial Environment

The 1969 to 1984 period was characterised by the expanding reach of career climbers and the greater prominence of financial considerations. The rise of film and lecture festivals, and the greater role of magazines, alongside more visible sponsorship, meant that elite climbers were more evident and made progress in appealing to new audiences in British society. Commercial parties had made serious investments in climbing and they were beginning to direct more of its actions, such as the type of climbs being pursued. Funding opportunities were being driven by the laws of supply and demand, and with potential sponsors directly interested in results that “must be measurable with television and press exposure quantified”, making it easy to see why expeditions needed to adapt.¹⁸⁸ Media was key, though, unlike the years up to 1969, it was no longer the sole source of financial backing as the sums involved grew and new opportunities saw corporate support take on greater responsibility.

The changing nature of elite expeditions arose mainly from commercial pressures. In particular, the large-scale expeditions in the early 1970s helped establish a well-known and more widely understood form of the sport which was appealing visually and in terms of aspiration which corporations could benefit from. This has parallels with Beal and Smith’s observations about commercial developments

¹⁸⁷ David Rose, 'Sponsors Leave British Climbers Up in the Air', *The Guardian*, March 31, 1986.

¹⁸⁸ CCPR, *The Howell Report*, 34.

in surfing, specifically the Mavericks coastal break, a dangerous area which offered good waves and became popular amongst elite surfers:

Mavericks exemplifies the tensions in late capitalist processes: it creates a distinctive and 'authentic' brand by drawing on the unique geographical break; it celebrates the spectacle of big wave riding... Yet, it uses very rational and standardised means to package the event and associated products to maximise profits.¹⁸⁹

A handful of climbers in this era were now succeeding in making a career out of the sport. Peter Gillman, who was close to Haston, reported that he and Whillans were "members of the elite handful of British climbers who make enough from the sport to live on".¹⁹⁰ Success for them meant being able to use their climbing skills to succeed on difficult mountains, from which they could develop name recognition and a personal brand which could then be capitalised on through different forms of media and communications, retail and other opportunities. As well as profiting individually, some of the organised climbs in which they took part were also breaking even or ending in profit. This was in sharp contrast to the norm for expeditions that sought relatively little (or no) commercial activity, evidenced by the MEF who explained in a 1975 letter to Bonington that "practically all our grants are given outright, and nearly all the expeditions end up in the red".¹⁹¹

Profitable expeditions did not happen by accident – they were the result of entrepreneurs making business connections that brought new financing into mountaineering. Under the political and economic climate of the early 1980s, market conditions were freer and entrepreneurial activity encouraged. However, it would not be fair to say that mountaineering was 'reinvented' as a result of this wider social shift. Entrepreneurial ideas were already shown to be effective and working for

¹⁸⁹ Becky Beal and Maureen Margaret Smith, 'Maverick's: Big-Wave Surfing and the Dynamic of "Nothing" and "Something"', *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* 13, no. 7-8 (2010), 1103.

¹⁹⁰ Peter Gillman, 'The Everest Fever', originally published in *The Guardian*, May 22, 1971, reprinted in Richard Nelsson, *On the Roof of the World: The Guardian Book of Mountains*, (London: Guardian Books. 2012), Kindle edition, location 2637.

¹⁹¹ Letter from D. Edmundson [from the MEF] to Chris Bonington, November 23, 1975, MHT, CBO/01/07/01.

climbers the 1960s and 1970s, filling the governing body void. Individual entrepreneurial approaches were at the heart of these connections and it was these individuals who felt and regarded this as work, just as Bonington had after the fundraising efforts required for the Everest attempt in 1972. During this period, many of these connections were new, seeing commercial partners engaged, the rising prominence of sponsorship and endorsements, and the absolute requirement for publicity. This latter point affected the trajectory of mountaineering. In 1976 Ronald Clark associated some elite climbers and their “more sensational climbs” as being “part of the entertainment industry”, and indeed the sport was to move forward in this vein.¹⁹²

Thanks to the reporting and writing of the large-scale climbs of the 1970s, the public had a sense of what it meant to be a mountaineer. As the era drew to a close, though, there were early signs of novelty and gimmick becoming increasingly important. This emphasis would continue from the late 1980s, and as these things became as, or more, important than mountaineering achievements and standards, the changing portrayal of the sport began in earnest. This considerable and pacey change occurred despite a growing opposition to some of these very ideas. The ethical debates that surrounded these issues were significant for the climbing world, and they reached their zenith during the 1970s and early 1980s.

The increasing economic influences over mountaineering led to a degree of discontent amongst many in the climbing community. No governing body was imposing rules about what could and could not be practiced and it modernised quickly thanks to the entrepreneurial efforts of the aforementioned climbers. This was in some contrast to other sports, the governing bodies for which were encouraged in the Howell Report to “maintain a sympathetic and realistic attitude towards the financial interests of their leading competitors yet also take account of the fundamental interests of sport as a whole”.¹⁹³ The hands-off approach in mountaineering meant it was individuals who sought and reaped the

¹⁹² Ronald Clark, *Men, Myths and Mountains*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1976), 268.

¹⁹³ CCPR, *The Howell Report*, 32.

benefits from most 'financial interests', and they were not aided in any active way by the Alpine Club, MEF or BMC.

At the heart of the increased tensions was the fact that mountaineering was being brought more overtly to the public's attention. Given mountaineering's inward looking sub-culture that dominated up to the post-war era, this presented constant threats to those advocates of a pursuit who placed particular emphasis on its roots and history. The 1970s saw some of the more direct criticism of these new modern elements of the sport. Ethical debates in mountaineering sometimes reflected broader controversies over amateur values and the discussions that grew up could be regarded as a re-emergence of amateurism from some in the community. They were still different to the debates of the pre-war years as they became more specific to the sport itself with unique ethical norms forming the basis of criticism. It was further complicated because, as demonstrated in the 1950s and 1960s and earlier, climbing had already compromised many of its amateur values relating to class and freedoms. Without an amateur voice or governing body, it was 'ethical' criticism that filled the void and tried to prevent economic matters becoming central to the sport. Although the discourse did not prevent commercial activity in this era, they did perhaps slow it down. By 1985 though, the climbing community as a whole showed less vocal ethical opposition.

Climbing magazines were the key site for much of this debate. By deliberately appealing to wider audiences and reporting the progress of elite mountaineers, the magazine *Mountain*, established in 1969, quickly established itself as an important part of the climbing community and its success revealed the demand for such publications. *Mountain's* main competitor emerged in 1976 under the title *Crags*. *Crags'* style, approach and target audience was quite different, and the magazine focused more on climbing in Britain at a regular, non-elite, standard. Satire was a key component of the magazine, often revolving around the climbing 'values' discussed later, and some features mimicked those of tabloid newspapers. It set out its intentions in the first edition with the explanation that:

We originally set out to fill a vacuum in the media for a hard-core climbing paper about British climbing and British climbers and at the same time have a lot of fun presenting good hard facts in a humorous framework. Well, dreams are made of such stuff. As it is, some sanity has crept in and a blend of general entertainment has won the day.¹⁹⁴

Both magazines and their relatively long runs reflect the changes that were going on in mountaineering in Britain. It would be *Crags*, with its less subtle tone which really demonstrated how the audience was changing and that this new audience did not care as much for some of the more traditional views. In many ways, *Crags* was reflecting some of the wider changes in the post-war era where society “readily strayed into humour, satire and sarcasm” as it contested “hypocrisy and convention [and] relished spontaneity and informality”.¹⁹⁵ Although *Mountain*, *Crags*, and other publications such as *Rocksport* (first published in the late 1960s) provided important opportunities to earn through publishing written materials and photography, they were also becoming a legitimate source to represent grassroots climbers and the whole community.

Although when elite and amateur climbers climbed together they seemingly showed little animosity, there was much more debate across the community as a whole through these magazines. The discussions that ran through their pages were important in determining what was acceptable and how the sport defined itself. The portrayals they created were strong too. Writing in 1984, Alan Rouse explained how:

Magazines have projected a rather *passe* image of old men walking up snow slopes. Every expedition is presented as a commercial hype, designed for the glorification and enrichment

¹⁹⁴ Geoff Birtles, ‘Leader’, *Crags* 1 (1976), 8.

¹⁹⁵ Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, 475-6.

of the participants, who have only gone in the first place because they are not capable of doing any real climbing.¹⁹⁶

Rouse went on to note that this did not reflect the realities of such climbs, but recognised that such depictions were significant. This influence was very important however, for climbing magazines became the main battleground for the opposition and defence of a more modern form of climbing.

At the crux of many ethical debates was the role of risk within the sport. As rock climber Jerry Moffat explained in words used in the definitions section of this thesis, and that can be applied to the full range of climbing activities: “Ethics are the unwritten rules for climbing. They are really more about style, what you can get away with and what you can’t”.¹⁹⁷ Ethical concerns tended to revolve around reduction of jeopardy and danger; things that made climbing easier or gave the impression that success was inevitable were broadly frowned upon. Neither a professional mind-set nor commercial activity in and of themselves reduced jeopardy, but the tactics employed, the purchase of high quality and voluminous equipment, new technology and assistance and team numbers, perhaps did and therefore many high profile climbers were targeted.

The idea of making success seem inevitable, or of not giving the mountain a chance, resonated with amateur perspectives, and this signalled that whilst ethics and amateurism were not identical, they shared common ground. This was especially so since within amateur values, ‘style’ was especially important and was deeply rooted in the social and intellectual values of the British upper and middle classes. The closeness of the two raised itself in other ways too such as language, for instance when in 1983 Gomersall referred to the “honourable sport” that climbing used to be.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Alan Rouse, ‘Ideas: Where Have All the Young Climbers Gone?’, *Mountain* 98 (1984), 42.

¹⁹⁷ Jerry Moffatt, *Revelations*, (Sheffield: Vertebrate Publishing, 2010), Kindle edition, location 587.

¹⁹⁸ Letter to editor from Ken Lindsay, *Mountain* 92 (1983), 50. Letter quotes prior comments by prominent rock climber, Pete Gomersall.

When it came to the reduction of jeopardy, the debate was more pronounced and more public in the case of the larger expeditions of the 1970s such as those discussed above. The manpower, provisions and other factors that these expeditions brought meant that there was, as Gilchrist has since summarised, “a sense in which the ways in which these climbs were achieved no longer met the ethical standards of the sport”.¹⁹⁹ These moving ‘ethical standards’ were based on what had fallen out of favour, what created discontent or that did not meet the desired standards of the wider and sometimes more traditionally minded community. Ultimately this came down to three factors – motivation, coverage, and tactics and equipment. These, in combination, reduced jeopardy, challenged norms and were at the heart of the arguments.

The first area of contention was motivation, with accusations made that high-profile mountaineers with career aspirations were more interested in earnings than they were in raising the standards of climbing. Following the unsuccessful attempt on Everest in 1972, *Mountain* raised the fact that the climb:

Has sparked off widespread criticism in the climbing world regarding the validity of such grandiose ventures and the motives of the participants. It has been suggested that ambition and the prospect of financial reward are the primary forces drawing climbers to this route.²⁰⁰

Given that some of the climbers were seeking careers, the argument seemed valid. Some of the strongest criticism of the new breed of professionally-minded elite climbers was aired through direct criticism and ridicule. Ken Wilson, Ian McNaught-Davis and Tom Patey were amongst those to mock the prominent climbers of the 1960s and 1970s.²⁰¹ For instance, Tom Patey wrote the following riddle

¹⁹⁹ Paul Gilchrist, ‘Beyond the Brink: Beachy Head as a Climbing Landscape’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 10 (2012), 1397.

²⁰⁰ ‘Information’, *Mountain* 25 (1973), 10.

²⁰¹ Ken Wilson (1941 – 2016) was the editor of *Mountain* magazine and other books. Ian McNaught-Davis (1929 – 2014) was an influential climber and commentator, later involved in key BMC roles.

about Bonington, which was repeated in *The Times* in 1985, but that hit at the heart of the motivation debate:

Onward Christian Bonington of The A.C.G.

Write another page of Alpine history.

He has climbed the Eigerwand, and he has climbed the Dru.

For a mere 10,000 francs he will climb with you.

Onward Christian Bonington of the ACG.

If you name the mountain, he will name the fee.²⁰²

Although we must treat Patey's work with some caution due to its humorous and generalised style, it was not without firm grounding. In the satirical second part of his two-part "The Professionals" article – mentioned in Chapter Two – he examined the issue further. In this piece he provided a smirking but critical look at how climbers could earn a living and directed criticism at individuals such as Joe Brown for product endorsement and Bonington for lecturing.²⁰³ Similarly, McNaught-Davis, in a tongue-in-cheek 1973 article suggesting new ways to raise finance such as more sponsored products and music releases, made the interesting observation that "whilst the arguments rumble on the ethics of drilling up this wall in the Andes, or pegging up that groove in Wales, there seem to be no holds barred when it comes to cash-raising".²⁰⁴

The spectre of dishonesty in climbing lurked and concerns about financial motives were at its heart. The Scottish mountaineer Thomas Graham Brown, who was involved in major expeditions in the 1930s and, as previously mentioned, became editor of the *Alpine Journal*, noted his fears that as personal financial interests crept into the sport, there would be more incentive for climbers to falsify an ascent

²⁰² Quoted in 'Restless Search for New Ideals', *The Times*, May 31, 1985.

²⁰³ Tom Patey, 'The Professionals Part 2: A Classified Directory', *Mountain* 5 (1969), 26-29.

²⁰⁴ Ian McNaught-Davis, 'Why Everest?', *Mountain* 25 (1973), 17.

in order to please a sponsor or to promote their ability and image.²⁰⁵ By the 1960s there were accusations of false rock climbing routes being claimed in Wales.²⁰⁶ Such issues were seen by some as having their root case in commercial and professional interests, so it is natural that a degree of wariness surrounded this. This too linked to how the sport's elite were being covered in the media.

The coverage that many high-profile climbs sought and received was the second source of criticism. As noted throughout this thesis, reaching out to a wide audience was necessary for career climbers to generate interest, backing and develop a public reputation. Criticism of this became widespread as a result. This was especially evident when the climb on Annapurna in 1970 even garnered comment from the senior military. At the same time as Bonington's team's climb, an AMA expedition summited the mountain by its 'normal' route.²⁰⁷ Field Marshall Sir Gerald Templar saw fit to write to *The Times* to compare these two climbs. He noted that the AMA climb, via the mountain's "easy route", was "composed of amateurs in the strictest sense, though needless to say they are highly skilled climbers".²⁰⁸ He went on to record his opinion of the differing levels of publicity between the two climbs on the same mountain: "I, for one, am disappointed that none of those responsible for our television programmes appreciated what interest and excitement it would have offered to the viewing public".²⁰⁹

Crags also focussed its ire on the high publicity expeditions, again often through satire. In the build-up to the 1978 K2 expedition the magazine noted it would "extract waste water" from the

²⁰⁵ Thomas Graham Brown, 'Professionalism' notes within folder entitled 'Alpine Club - Everest Committee', NLS, Acc 4338 209(1), 4-5.

²⁰⁶ Jones and Milburn report how, in the late 1960s, there was a series of incidents where false routes were proclaimed with the climber responsible even producing an "interim guide-book which included his spurious routes". Jones and Milburn, *Welsh Rock*, 188.

²⁰⁷ Of which Bonington was a founder member during his time in the Army. Unsworth, *Everest*, 443.

²⁰⁸ Letter from Field Marshall Sir Gerald Templar to *The Times*, June 9, 1970.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

expedition,²¹⁰ and ran a fictitious story about arguments over breakfasts for the climb.²¹¹ In the same section they also ridiculed Bonington's advertisements for Bovril and their part sponsorship of the aforementioned 1977 expedition to The Ogre – on which Scott and Bonington sustained serious injuries during the descent – joking how important Oxo Cubes were to Scott's survival. It went on to speak about Bonington's wife, explaining that:

Wendy is now running a little pottery business. Rumour gas [sic] it that she makes a very nice model of Chris wearing an attractive pointed cap and holding a fishing rod. Quite the thing for your rockery. Just wash him down with Bovril every Spring and he looks as good as new.²¹²

This was picking up on the increasing incidents of climbers endorsing products and being directly sponsored. Bonington was paid £5,000 to advertise Bovril in 1977, moving him into the territory occupied by some of Britain's best-known sports stars, though other climbers tended to endorse sporting goods more closely linked to the sport.²¹³ Climbers could gain financially from their connections with a product, as Don Whillans' experience with the Whillans Harness demonstrated in the previous chapter. Yet, sponsorship of individuals also became more prevalent in this period. The 1960s saw Bonington used by Pindisports in their advertising, but the 1970s and 1980s saw different climbers more closely associated with specific products. Troll, for example, used Haston and Scott in their equipment catalogue in early 1980.²¹⁴ In one Karrimor advert, Dougal Haston was shown with the caption "Dougal Haston, Karrimor Alpine Technical Adviser, starting traverse of ice field on final assault of Everest".²¹⁵ In 1979, an advert for a Berghaus jacket included endorsements by Al Rouse,

²¹⁰ 'Private High', *Crags* 12 (1978), 43.

²¹¹ 'Private High', *Crags* 11 (1978), 39.

²¹² 'Private High', *Crags* 9 (1977), 38.

²¹³ Letter from P. Arnould (Bovril) to Chris Bonington, August 25, 1977, MHT, CBO/01/11/01/03.

²¹⁴ Troll Mountaineering and Caving Equipment Catalogue Issue 4, 1980, AC, Box 11 Don Whillans: Troll, 1922/P48.

²¹⁵ Advert in *Mountain* 47 (1976), 7.

Rab Carrington, Brian Hall and Roger Baxter-Jones, the team that climbed Jannu the year before.²¹⁶ In some cases, product endorsement went even wider. Some rock climbers also found sponsorship opportunities based around them as climbers. Ron Fawcett, having expected in his youth that there was no money to be made in climbing, found sponsorship in the 1980s,²¹⁷ as did others including Jerry Moffatt.²¹⁸

There was angst too at the way the coverage for expeditions was encouraged and exploited, particularly the additional financial benefits that would come if the summit were reached. Indeed, in 1975 Barclays had deliberately set out to make arrangements where reaching the summit would yield greater income – “the ideal with any media contract would be to arrange a minimum guaranteed payment... with an additional bonus should the expedition be wholly successful”.²¹⁹ The premium of reaching the summit was undoubtable, and the idea that this was the prize that dominated the approach of elite climbers was the one that was being circulated amongst critics. Success rather than style may have mattered more to climbers on commercial expeditions and this perhaps bred a suspicion of sponsors. Indeed, wariness over potential funding sources was common in other niche sports. Lombard has explained how there was suspicion of the involvement of Nike and others in skateboarding in the 1990s, a misgiving amongst participants that was strong enough to lead to a product being withdrawn from the market after only a year.²²⁰

²¹⁶ Advert in *Crags* 19 (1979), 39.

²¹⁷ Fawcett’s sponsorship included arrangements with manufacturers Troll and Hanwag, undertaking promotional work. Ron Fawcett, *Rock Athlete*, (Sheffield: Vertebrate Publishing, 2011), Kindle edition, location 2206-2287, 2301-2352, 2570.

²¹⁸ For instance, Moffatt was involved in a mid-1980s paid photoshoot with other climbers for the outdoor shop, Sport Scheck. Moffatt, *Revelations*, 1956.

²¹⁹ ‘Progress Report on Media Contracts as at 4th November 1974’, appendix to ‘British Everest Expedition 1975 Minutes of Meeting’, November 5, 1974, MHT, ATR/1. For detailed illustrations see also ‘Estimated Income from Media’, appendix to ‘British Everest Expedition 1975 Minutes of Meeting’, February 12, 1975, MHT, ATR/1.

²²⁰ Kara-Jane Lombard, ‘Skate and Create / Skate and Destroy: The Commercial and Governmental Incorporation of Skateboarding’, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 24, no. 4 (2010), 477.

Direct criticism was aired after the 1972 Everest climb aimed at the deliberate seeking of publicity by the expedition. Ian McNaught-Davis spoke out in an opinion piece in *Mountain*, aimed at its commercial nature, shortly after the failed climb. Whilst remaining respectful of the achievements of the climb he took issue with the approach that they used, remarking that “From the success of the processional footballers’ venture into pop records I can see the ‘Everest Squad’ backed by the Alpine Club Wind Ensemble and accompanied by the Namche Sherpa’s Choir singing their way to a golden disc”. He also noted how other sponsored goods would suffer if Bonington (in this instance) lent his name to everything:

The old dodge of sponsored products would receive a severe jolt. No climber would rush to buy his Whillans harness, his Joe Brown helmet or even his MacInnes ice axe. Everything from bootlaces to oxygen sets would have to carry the name "Sir Christmas 'Roof of the World' Bloggs" before any of us would buy or even 'recover' it from a nearby crag.²²¹

Such critique of overt publicity seeking was backed up later by Ken Wilson, then editor of *Mountain* in an editorial entitled “Everest: The Financial Dilemma”. Wilson expressed fears for how mountaineering as a recreation might be perceived due to excessive coverage – “involvement in such an extravagant project at this time of austerity lays the expedition, and indeed the whole climbing world, open to the charge of irresponsibility and frivolity in relation to the world around them”.²²² This focus on publicity, alongside questioning of climber motives sat alongside the third area of contention - climbing tactics and the implications of this on equipment use.

Siege style tactics were common amongst the more commercial expeditions of the 1970s. Siege style approaches had been popular in the 1920s, 1930s and 1950s for major climbs and by their very nature implied a sense of team, group and shared effort. Individuals were not all striving for the summit, but

²²¹ Ian McNaught-Davis, ‘Why Everest?’, *Mountain* 25 (1973), 17.

²²² ‘Information’, *Mountain* 40 (1974), 9.

knowingly joined to do a particular job – a support role or aiding another. Such an approach was entwined with the imperialistic attitudes of mountaineering prior to 1953. Therefore, many of the original attitudes associated to siege style climbing were amateur, but they were applied in a critically different manner to the more professionally minded attempts of the 1970s where, as we have seen, individual success was paramount. As a result, siege style tactics came to represent something different – expense, publicity, commercial arrangements and improved chance of success due to their scale, all things that attracted criticism. In this era, the need to pursue and gain personal fame meant that the role of ‘support climber’ became less desirable. It was no longer an amateur-based team effort, but often an individual one where personal earnings were very much in some people’s minds. Given that this era meant to some “the passing of ‘the dependency culture’ in favour of a new wave of enterprise and individualism”, it is perhaps understandable to find such thoughts taking greater priority than before.²²³

The personal responsibility that was connected to success as a climber meant that if one was not amongst the summing party there could be very real personal implications, as Boysen found. Wilson and Pearson recognised this and the implications, explaining that:

Just as in other spectator sports, the encroachment of large financial interests is bound to create aberrations. The experiences of the present expedition [1971 International South West Face] were instructive in revealing just how disruptive such commercial strains can be, and how they can undermine the cohesion of what, twenty years ago, might have been a perfectly happy team.²²⁴

²²³ Morgan, *The People’s Peace*, 437.

²²⁴ Wilson and Parson, ‘Everest: Post-Mortem’, 14. The commercial disruptions are noted in the discussion under the earlier ‘Everest 1972’ heading.

They went on to note that some of the climbers were "in no way interested in an all-out team effort. All they want is personal glory by reaching the summit the easiest way possible and to become national heroes in France and Italy", whilst failure cost one of the climbers potential advertising contracts.²²⁵

In a 1977 article entitled "Small Expeditions", Joe Tasker noted that "Because of the investment, sponsorship and publicity involved in an expedition, especially to the Himalaya, there has been the tendency to try to guarantee success by increasing the numbers in the team".²²⁶ Expensive and extensive support on these climbs was important for many sponsors and expedition leaders desiring the maximum likelihood of success, and this contributed to growing disillusionment with such an approach. Some even regarded siege climbing as a "non-event".²²⁷ Two years later Collister supplemented Tasker's piece by stating that:

The principle that size inspires confidence is as true in the attracting of financial sponsors as it is in the apparently necessary preliminaries of winning over the media. The team must be large, equipment the best, the budget enormous, or the men of business will not be impressed. Heavy commitment to a particular sponsor, or a film or book contract dependent on success can exert a pressure similar to that of national expectations.²²⁸

Ian McNaught-Davis was part of the vocal criticism of such tactics, and the reduced challenge the resource-heavy approach implied. He explained how "A large party with unlimited resources, really breaks little new ground, despite the arduous nature of the climb; the only thing that could stop them would be the weather or avalanches".²²⁹

²²⁵ Ibid., 22-24.

²²⁶ Joe Tasker, 'Small Expeditions', *Alpine Journal* 82 (1977), 23.

²²⁷ Jeff Lowe, 'Work and Play', *Mountain* 72 (1980), 42-3.

²²⁸ Rob Collister, 'Small Expeditions in the Himalaya', *Alpine Journal* 84 (1979), 168.

²²⁹ Ian McNaught-Davis, 'Annapurna South Face [book review]', *Mountain* 15 (1971), 34.

Gordon has explored this role of technology, arguing that the use of equipment to make new routes possible, or easier, is at odds with the claims of purity that mountaineers have of their pursuit. Citing the experience of Pete Boardman, Gordon noted that he had written extensively and attempted deliberately difficult objectives to help satisfy his own climbing ambitions and generate interest in his climbing. However, upon completing his ascent of Everest as part of a large scale expedition where equipment such as fixed ropes were widely used, Boardman was dissatisfied due to the fact that this meant, as Gordon suggests, “the summit is presented to him: he does not *act* to gain it”.²³⁰

By contrast, alpine style climbing was viewed as a more ethical approach. This saw each individual intending to succeed, committing themselves entirely to the mountain and the goal, and had the advantage of being cheaper and reducing (though not entirely removing) the need for commercial backing. This eventually increased the popularity of alpine style climbing amongst career climbers, particularly after it was also shown to work even in the greater ranges – for instance in the alpine style ascent of Jannu in 1978. In the report for that climb the members predicted that “over the next few years we expect that the concept of Himalayan climbing will change rapidly as more and more parties begin to climb in [alpine] style”.²³¹ This sentiment was echoed by the MEF who “very much preferred” this style of climb when considering grant giving in the 1980s.²³²

Other criticism of style came from a series of cartoons in 1980 published in *Mountain* contrasting siege style and alpine style climbing tactics. One of the images (Figure 5, see page 181) shows an alpine style climber – looking remarkably similar to Doug Scott – climbing a difficult pitch with no equipment, alongside a second climber on an easy route with a wide array of equipment and hardware. In a tongue-in-cheek manner, this image gets to the heart of the issue of ethics relating to style – the

²³⁰ Jon F. Gordon, ‘Means and Motives: The Mystification of Mountaineering Discourse’, *Postcolonial Text* 2, no. 2 (2006), 3. Emphasis in original.

²³¹ *The British Jannu Expedition 1978*, 1978, Alan Rouse Library, R626E, 11.

²³² Bill Ruthven, ‘Changing Fashions in Expedition Grants’, *Alpine Journal* 107 (2002), 145.

relative ease of one's route up a mountain with all the time and equipment necessary, but the reduced aesthetic style.²³³ This did not strictly bring into question the authenticity of the climb – no one was denying that these were real experiences and major achievements in difficult and dangerous circumstances. However, questions over style invoked amateur perspectives around the 'proper' way a mountain should be climbed.

²³³ Gary Kennard, 'Alpine Style', *Mountain* 71 (1980), 46-48.



Figure 5 - Gary Kennard, 'Alpine Style'

The climbers were aware of how some of their more controversial actions may be perceived. For instance, Bonington and Haston, on a winter climb on the Grandes Jorasses in the early 1970s took a helicopter up to the Leschaux glacier and, upon realising the severity of the route, attempted the climb in siege style although they had originally intended an alpine style attempt. They were conscious of the ethical implications of both of these actions and realised that “The cynical might well say ‘They’re doing it to complete their contract – to get their blood money from the sponsors’”.²³⁴

Siege climbs were increasingly portrayed as opposite to alpine style and their use was largely frowned upon. The community was moving away from these styles of climbs and Dennis Gray summed up this point-of-view by explaining that rather than fixating on successful ascents at all costs, “we must acknowledge that it is how a mountain is climbed which is paramount, not that it is conquered”.²³⁵ This was a somewhat amateur-type perspective that promoted the human versus environment ideal, with the climbers not relying on technology or scale of their effort to find success, a perspective that applied internationally too.²³⁶

An attempt to reconcile some of the differences in the form of ‘capsule climbing’ – “whereby about 1000m of rope would be fixed to stock the first camp. The rope would then be pulled up and the process repeated” – had limited success though it also had significant flaws.²³⁷ Alpine style expeditions became increasingly popular and siege tactics less desirable. By 1977, *ACG Bulletin* editor Rob Ferguson explained that there were “fewer sledgehammer expeditions cracking soft nuts, and

²³⁴ Christian Bonington, ‘Too Cold for Ethics?’, *Mountain* 21 (1972), 17.

²³⁵ Dennis Gray, ‘The Himalayan Ethic – Time for a Rethink?’, *Alpine Journal* 76 (1971), 157.

²³⁶ This form of climbing had become popular on big walls in America – particularly in Yosemite – in the 1950s and 1960s, with a standout being the 1958 ascent of The Nose on El Capitan which “had taken forty-five days spread over more than sixteen months” using a huge volume of hardware to allow the climbers to make progress. Clark, ‘Men, Myths and Mountains’, 245.

²³⁷ Scott, *Himalayan Climber*, 124.

technical standards in expedition climbing have advanced along with those in other branches of mountaineering”.²³⁸

It should not be a surprise that the opposition generated around the more modern aspects of climbing existed and that they found a common voice. Peter Leese has explained how, more broadly, feelings of identity help to “bring people together”, and the wider climbing community can be regarded as an example of a group in which many shared “a framework of experience” that can be the product of agreement and conflicts.²³⁹ From the grassroots through to the elites, commonalities existed because all of these individuals pursued a similar experience where they pitted themselves against the vertical natural world. There was an interest in not diminishing this experience, and many did not wish to simplify it so much that its uniqueness was lost and, thus, dedication devalued. This was why the collective views of the mountaineering community were of such importance – because they were part of the same group of people as the likes of Bonington and Rouse. As a number of other authors have demonstrated, this was not a unique British complaint.²⁴⁰

Developments such as these were often viewed as making mountaineering artificially easier. Donnelly and Williams explored this point in 1985 and found that jeopardy was such a key point that “to remove it from climbing would be to make the activity something else; whatever it would be, it would not be climbing”.²⁴¹ Thus, the serious, fundamental challenges to mountaineering were aimed at things that affected reduced jeopardy alongside difficulty, though it is notable that other advancements such as safety harnesses and helmets were not subject of similar critique. More comfortable was the idea –

²³⁸ Rob Ferguson, ‘Editorial’, *ACG Bulletin*, (1977), 5.

²³⁹ Peter Leese, *Britain since 1945: Aspects of Identity*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), 1-2.

²⁴⁰ Unsworth, *Everest*, 406-7; see also McCurdy, ‘The Economics of Innovation’; and Yves Laulan and Tony Toole, ‘Mountains for Sale?’, *Mountain* 68 (1979), 24-26.

²⁴¹ Trevor Williams and Peter Donnelly, ‘Subcultural Production, Reproduction and Transformation in Climbing’, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 20 (1985), 4.

as portrayed by Doug Scott – of identifying exciting new alpine style objectives that would be both “committing” and where “the margin of safety has to be kept satisfyingly narrow”.²⁴²

Across all of the ethical debates and critiques, a common feature was some degree of resistance to change. For many, the introduction of corporate sponsorship, mainstream coverage and product endorsement was not progress in the sport. The achievements were real, but the means by which success was gained was not a desirable part of the mountaineering landscape and it threatened what many climbers enjoyed. Finances were believed to have had a corrupting effect on the sport and felt to be placed above the practice of high quality climbing, and the fear was that mountaineering was regressing.

However, the critics and practitioners eventually found common ground which, for the most part, reduced the influence of climbing ethics. During the 1980s, Aid Burgess recalls discussions with leading rock climber Phil Burke where the latter explained his reasoning behind rappelling a climb before actually climbing it so that the moves could be practised. “‘Isn’t that cheating?’ I countered, knowing that when I began rock-climbing, it was. ‘That’s Stone-Age ethics’, he said with a grin.”²⁴³ Just as the sport was adapting to accept commercial pressures so too were adaptations made in what was deemed to be acceptable ethics, and this would be particularly marked from the later 1980s.

Further, despite criticisms of elite climbers and the high profile expeditions of the era in climbing magazines and even the *Alpine Journal*, these publications continued to welcome and respect the elite climbers who were the source of their jibes. Scott, Bonington, Haston and others wrote articles and had photographs included in these same publications, certainly reflecting the fact that monetary benefit was not excluding people from the climbing community. There also remained recognition of genuinely elite climbing, whether driven by economic interests or not. In fact, if Bonington’s

²⁴² Doug Scott, ‘Himalaya – An Alpine Playground’, *Mountain* 77 (1981), 42.

²⁴³ Burgess and Burgess, *Burgess Book of Lies*, 340.

perception that the climbing community was moving towards a more professional mindset is correct, then it was fairly relaxed. Discussing sponsorship for a climb in the Alps in 1972, Bonington queried “Is this unethical? In Britain I suspect no – not anyway, as far as common practice goes; many good British climbers have gained sponsorship for their climbs to cover the cost and perhaps a bit more”.²⁴⁴

It was in the style of climbing where ethics gained the most traction. There was an overarching shift away from the major expeditions of the earlier 1970s as more Himalayan climbs were attempted in alpine style. These were undertaken alongside commercial interests, by climbers such as Scott and Rouse who carefully straddled the ethical / career climber boundary. Arguably, though, the siege style climb would have decreased in prominence regardless of the criticisms. Over supply of expeditions and lack of backers willing to contribute the very high costs required to support such approaches meant that climbers were already seeking more efficient ways to climb. This was necessary if they were to retain their career aspirations, for they owned their own labour and it was in their gift to develop their approach. Changing from siege to alpine style climbs was a natural choice, which happened to play into wider ethical preferences.

Finally, climbers developing their interest from the 1960s and 1970s saw publicity, alternative styles of climbing and adoption of technology as the norm, not as exceptional behaviours. They were also witness to the changing patterns of climbing style even amongst career climbers. Therefore, there was less reason to bemoan these more modern features of the sport because people were content to be involved in spite of this.²⁴⁵ Indeed, they may have been part of an audience at one point, and found attraction to the sport having witnessed some of the high profile climbers of this era. Increasingly too, some chose not to be distracted by the more commercial aspects and concentrate on what they were interested in. As well-known climber and commentator Ed Douglas has remarked on behalf of many

²⁴⁴ Bonington, 'Too Cold for Ethics?', 17.

²⁴⁵ An idea Lombard has also explored in skateboarding. Lombard, 'Skate and Create', 480.

amateurs, "Media attention and sponsorship deals seem hilarious distractions by comparison".²⁴⁶

From the 1980s this became the prevailing attitude as new client climbers tended to be ignored by the climbing community despite growing mainstream interest.

Conclusion

The 1970s and 1980s were the years when capitalising on one's personal brand became more widely accepted. Although a number of climbers were able to generate an income this way, Bonington was exceptional in remaining at the top of the sport. With team leadership and organisational skills and an entrepreneurial approach to fundraising, he became well-known and central to the public-side of the sport. As Reinhold Messner has remarked of the 1970s, "'Bonington was really the motor'" going on to explain that his influence was international; "...he had the idea for the Annapurna South Face. All over Europe - not only climbers but also normal people who were interested in mountaineering - we understood that this was something new, something great".²⁴⁷ It is no accident that expeditions including or led by him dominated much of the commercial successes between 1969 and 1984.

Whilst the Howell Report found that commercial activity was changing the attitudes of various sporting governing bodies, the importance of individuals meant this was reduced in mountaineering.²⁴⁸ The changes were filtering through in a small way though. As well as an implied acceptance from the Alpine Club, the MEF benefitted directly from the commercial and mountain success in 1970. After 1975, Barclays was persuaded to continue providing much smaller grants for several more years without any of the overt publicity associated. This was followed by the involvement of Bass Carrington who also donated to the MEF, with these monies dispersed amongst new

²⁴⁶ Ed Douglas, 'Soul Traders: 150 Years of Peddling Adventures', *Alpine Journal* 112 (2007), 130.

²⁴⁷ Paul Deegan, 'Reflections on Everest', *Geographical*, (October 2005), 64.

²⁴⁸ CCPR, *The Howell Report*, 5.

expeditions.²⁴⁹ The very fact that these mountaineering bodies were prepared to welcome such commercial funding sources is a reflection of the acceptance of such a world in mountaineering. This resulted from more organised and less traditional arrangements. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Alpine Club transformed in the 1960s to retain its relevance, and the MEF clearly adapted to optimise its financial role and responsibilities. In a further sign of the shifts that were taking place, the BMC appointed Dennis Gray as General Secretary in the mid-1970s which was perceived at the time as “marking the transition from an amateur to a professional organisation”, seen as necessary despite climbing’s “anarchist” values, and demonstrating how the sport was attempting to modernise.²⁵⁰

An editorial in *Mountain* written by Tim Lewis in early 1983 signalled exactly why these modern financially-centred developments were important. Writing that the state of the sport in Britain was healthy, he acknowledged that there were still some criticisms of commercialisation. Citing Reinhold Messner’s overt acceptance of sponsorship income to climb K2, Lewis noted:

He accepted an enormous sum of money to climb K2, but then which self-respecting Himalayan mountaineer wouldn’t want to climb K2?... He dispels fear of sell out because when it is clear that he can pick and choose what he wished to do he has elected to pursue what is apparently a campaign to be the first man to climb all the 8,000m peaks in the world. If that is not a traditional mountaineering objective what is? If commercialism can bring benefits such as that then it ain’t all that bad.²⁵¹

What Lewis makes clear here is that only through commercialism could some aspects of climbing really be progressed. Whilst some might have regarded the 14 8,000m peaks as a gimmick, Lewis advocated

²⁴⁹ ‘Rules and Fools’, *Mountain* 84 (1982), 19.

²⁵⁰ Dave Partridge, ‘The Professionals’, *Mountain Life* 17 (1974-5), 28.

²⁵¹ ‘Editorial Comment – Live Rock’, *Mountain* 89 (1983), 10.

this as a true step forward in mountaineering and realised that commercial backing for such expeditions was a necessary enabler for such achievements, and thus had a pivotal role to play.

However, this would be just a prelude to the greater changes in the post-1985 era. Commercial imperatives were already shaping the types of expedition that were undertaken, and this soon became more prominent. Two predictions made in the 1970s about the sport demonstrated the possible futures for elite mountaineering. Bonington had predicted in 1973 that:

I enjoy my own style of complicated existence, my wheeler-dealing, rushing around lecturing, writing articles, books and organising expeditions. But then I see it that I filled a niche in my particular generation of climbers... They're also going to farther places as more and more climbers can put their hands on, say £250– £300 and go off abroad, there's not so much need for major expensive expeditions. I think you'll find climbing will go back to being more private again and people will go off in small groups, just to climb abroad, without the fanfare of publicity.²⁵²

Conversely, Faux forewarned a year earlier that "The question remains, of course, as to how far climbers can go in this respect, and how far they are prepared to go, before finding themselves victims of the most crass forms of commercial exploitation".²⁵³ Moving into the 1980s, and especially into the 1990s, it was clear that Faux's prediction was far closer to the realities of climbing than Bonington's.

²⁵² Carol Dix, 'The Social Climber', originally published in *The Guardian* March 10, 1973, reprinted in Nelsson, *On the Roof of the World*, 2770.

²⁵³ Ronald Faux, 'Value of Everest Attempt is Questioned', *The Times*, October 26, 1972.

Chapter 4. 1985 to 2000 - Reaching for the Headlines: The Expansion in Potential Career Climbers

A mid-1990s quote from elite climber, Alison Hargreaves, encapsulated the predominant theme of this era. In 1995, she remarked that:

A lot of climbers think climbing owed them a living, but unless they can appeal to the general public, there really isn't any money in it.¹

Hargreaves' comments made plain the requirement for growing a climber's appeal if they were to succeed as a career climber. This, though, became more complicated in the face of a changing public perception of mountaineering, and the increasing use of novelty which often gained more attention than genuinely new challenges. Throughout this era the sport moved further from its old traditions, and even the new norms that pervaded the earlier post-war period, with one consequence being the perception that its portrayal was increasingly trivialised amongst the wider British public.

As the previous chapters have shown, high-altitude, greater ranges mountaineering was the reserve of a relatively small elite of ambitious mountaineers up to 1985. They were part of a generation of climbers who directly made a living from the sport by juggling their expeditions and ascents with commercial opportunities. Combined, these provided an income to live from and to fund their next ventures, and helped to redefine what it meant to be an elite mountaineer. The possibility of earning an income was limited only to those who were at the height of their sport and could, and wanted to, generate a reputation through their mountaineering achievements. This required strong climbing ability, coupled with sales skills and an entrepreneurial approach. Whilst some criticised the commercial and publicity-seeking side of the sport that they pursued, it had become a more acceptable part of the modernisation of mountaineering and selling the sport to corporate interests as well as selling oneself had become inescapable.

¹ Emma Brooker, 'Public Lives: A Dot on the Landscape', *The Guardian*, May 31, 1995.

The changes of earlier decades had increased the mainstream nature of mountaineering, though this still had its limits, as demonstrated by the still small number of career climbers and the fact that it gained major press attention for only fleeting moments. Thus, career and earning opportunities were available to only a tiny minority. Some of the stalwarts such as Chris Bonington and Doug Scott occupied the limited professional places for decades – Bonington still having Berghaus sponsorship in the 2000s – which made it difficult for others to replace or even sit alongside them at the top of the vocational side of the sport, regardless of relative sporting ability. For anyone else to compete, they needed to stand out from this distinguished crowd through both high achievement and by appealing to the public, potentially by expanding the audience interested in the sport.

Newer elite climbers therefore found it difficult to create earning opportunity, but this did not mean, as this chapter illustrates, that the few at the top went unchallenged. The need to attract sponsorship, publicity and recognition remained should an elite climber wish to earn a living. In attempting to reach such a position, climbers would both push themselves further than ever before, and compromise their climbing plans. The way that the sport, especially the risk associated with practising it, was being framed and sold in the post-1985 era was changing as new individuals recognised how to raise their appeal. This helped a small number of elite British mountaineers including Hargreaves and Alan Hinkes (1954 -) to challenge the established career climbers during the 1980s and 1990s. To ensure they could continue to earn from their sport, Scott and Bonington also needed to diversify and find new entrepreneurial approaches.

An early 1990s article in the *Economist* summed up the predicament that elite high-altitude climbers faced. Often it was climbs that were not difficult in a mountaineering sense but were understandable by the general public that attracted sponsors, such that many elite professional climbers

...find it hard to persuade commercial sponsors to back an assault on a mountain that nobody other than a few climbers has ever heard of. Sponsors are not impressed when the supplicants

plead, accurately, that the unclimbed peaks demand far greater effort and skill than Mount Everest and other well trodden, well mapped mountains.²

Although it was not easy, this did not stop some from taking more entrepreneurial and publicity-savvy approaches to selling expeditions to lesser-known peaks. Being an effective publicist was important. The savviness to find an angle on an expedition that would make it attractive to the public was critical for sponsors and media to take it seriously and, as in the 1970s, Bonington in particular was able to package and sell an expedition effectively.

This was not the only substantial change, as the mid-1980s marked the start of a significant shift in the economy of climbing. For those who wished to spend time in adventurous locations without some of the elite climber pressures, an old idea was revisited that would create new earning potential without the need for publicity. The concept of guiding – which had its roots in the mid-nineteenth century – was reinterpreted through its introduction into the greater ranges. The appeal of these places to relatively unskilled client climbers was a result of expanding tourist interests at this time.³ For the privilege, these new tourists paid guiding companies led by experienced guides to not only help them on the mountain, but to provide all that was needed for an ascent, from tents and food to logistics and equipment.

This was evidence of a new, wider, demand for mountaineering and a game form that catered for it.⁴ In a further twist, some client climbers found that they too had backgrounds and novelties that were attractive to the media. Perversely this meant that non-elite clients found that they could also earn

² 'Climb Every Mountain', *Economist*, March 7, 1993, 87.

³ Ewert and Jamieson have explained how "the availability of free time and discretionary income; advances in technology; economic conditions, availability of infrastructure... and willingness to pay" are characteristics related to the popularity of adventure tourism, and run in parallel with other tourism developments. Alan Ewert and Lynn Jamieson, 'Current Status and Future Directions in the Adventure Tourism Industry', in Jeff Wilks and Stephen J. Page, eds., *Managing Tourist Health and Safety in the New Millennium*, (London: Pergamon, 2003), 70.

⁴ Stephen Hardy, 'Entrepreneurs, Organizations, and the Sport Marketplace: Subjects in Search of Historians', *Journal of Sport History* 13, no. 1 (1986): 14-33.

an income from the sport. As will be shown through the likes of Rebecca Stephens (1961 -), what it meant to be a climber in the eyes of the public markedly changed as a result. The professional guides could work in these places, whilst the tourists could set foot on the perceived 'ultimate' climbing challenges of Everest and other well-known peaks. Rather than spectate from a distance by reading or watching an expedition's accounts, a keen walker with deep pockets could attempt a Himalayan summit. All of this was the culmination of economic pressures, shaped by a changing society, on mountaineering. This was a significant shift, reorienting the elite climbers' aims and ambitions and driving many to tougher ascents to differentiate themselves from the popular tourist climber.

Three groups were therefore central in redefining modern elite mountaineering after 1985. The first of these, examined in the first section of the chapter, were elite mountaineers – both established and new – who continued to court publicity, but needed to find new entrepreneurial ways to achieve this. The second were the brand new non-elite client climbers who found themselves with fresh opportunities to earn money from something that was not necessarily their skill. This group is explored in the 'guided climbing' section of this chapter, alongside the third group of elite climbers who opted to guide these new clients and earn a more stable living in so doing. This chapter charts the experiences of these groups, specifically looking at how people within them could earn either as part of a career or part of a short-term opportunity, though it is still recognised that these groups co-existed with the constant group of climbers who pursued the sport purely for recreation rather than commercial opportunity. The chapter shows how they encouraged corporate interests, and how adaptations were required in the commodification of the sport to keep financial opportunities viable.

With individualism a critical theme for this period, the analysis in this chapter fills a gap in climbing history. It shows how economic considerations were central to much of the sport at this time and how the few traditional and amateur voices explored in the previous chapter became increasingly outdated. Some more traditional themes have been attributed to this era, for instance through Bayers' reflections on imperialism, while the official Alpine Club history rightly recognises the substantial

achievements of climbers who did not seek the public limelight such as Mick Fowler (1956 -) who has worked at HM Revenue and Customs throughout his time as a high achieving climber.⁵ However, for those who sought a climbing career, this chapter demonstrates the uniqueness of this era since being able to climb well was far from the main determining factor in whether someone could earn a living. Further, the importance of the relatively free conditions in the market are recognised – thanks again to the minimal role of a governing body. The main result was an expanding audience made up of different consumer types attracted to different forms of mountaineering. This helps us to understand how the era led to more commercialisation of this form of outdoors adventure, but at the same time a growing sensationalised, and purportedly less authentic, understanding of the sport.

Of course, much of the change in mountaineering in this era was heavily influenced by wider social, economic and political change in wider British society. For one, Britain was experiencing rapid readjustment at the beginning of the 1980s. Looking back to the beginning of the decade it has been summarised as a time during which “more change and more conflict were crammed... than any other decade in the second half of the twentieth century”.⁶ This came in different forms, ranging from tense moments like the hostility and violence demonstrated at the 1985 riots in Brixton, Peckham and elsewhere, through to increasing personal wealth and opportunity under the new sense of individualism.⁷ Despite periods of major upheaval, the period from 1979 through to 1990 and beyond was dominated by the influence of Margaret Thatcher.⁸

With rising salaries and reducing taxes – all resulting from Thatcher’s neoliberal approach – there were expanding opportunities for many, although not all benefitted.⁹ One implication was the continued

⁵ Peter L. Bayers, *Imperial Ascent: Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire*, (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 127-141; George Band, *Summit: 150 Years of the Alpine Club*, (London: Collins, 2006), 199-204.

⁶ Andy McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society*, (London: Constable, 2011), 10.

⁷ Alwyn W. Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!: Britain in the 1980s*, (London: Aurum Press, 2013), Kindle edition, location 204.

⁸ Graham Stewart, *Bang! A History of Britain in the 1980s*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2013).

⁹ McSmith, *No Such Thing*, 4.

and more obvious decline of manufacturing in favour of the service sector.¹⁰ By the late 1980s, after two decades of uncertainty and economic fluctuations, Marwick explained how there were widespread claims that “the pessimism and gloom had been dispelled, [and] there was a new purpose in British life, an ‘enterprise culture’ was coming into full flowering”.¹¹ This shifting culture helped bring the role of celebrity to the fore. Some capitalised on this to acquire considerable wealth and popularity, for instance through “tours by pop superstars [that] became bigger and more lucrative and were individually branded to enhance their commercial potential”.¹² Such musicians, alongside some sports stars, realised extensive earning opportunity, including through the growing use of their personal brand.

In this context, the economic value of sport was being increasingly recognised. Athletics, and eventually Rugby Union, followed other popular British sports in adopting a more modern approach by embracing more professional and commercial pressures. In these sports and others, specific individual sports people were being promoted and followed by the public, and they could capitalise on this financially, where growing sums were at stake.¹³ Endorsement and advertising opportunities also arose, with footballers and other sportspeople such as Ian Botham increasingly able to exploit their growing renown by promoting non-sports related products with far greater sums than similar endorsement in previous years.¹⁴ Importantly though, each of these steps contributed to Allison’s overarching belief of “the power of money to change one’s relationship with an activity” – sport or not.¹⁵

¹⁰ Simon Rogers, ‘How Britain Changed Under Margaret Thatcher. In 15 charts’, *The Guardian*, April 8, 2013, online <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/datablog/2013/apr/08/britain-changed-margaret-thatcher-charts> (accessed July 30, 2017).

¹¹ Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, (London: Penguin, 1996), 278.

¹² Turner, *Rejoice*, 104.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁴ Ric Sissons, *The Players: A Social History of the Professional Cricketer*, (London: The Kingswood Press, 1988), 300.

¹⁵ Lincoln Allison, *Amateurism in Sport: An Analysis and a Defence*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 137.

This was also the era where perhaps the most successful commodification of mainstream sport was taking place. The continuing expansion of the Murdoch empire and all that it meant for various British sports, and football in particular, took the relationship of sport and money to a new level. As well as the need for the consumer to pay for a new service (Sky television) to watch football, sponsorship of teams and eventually stadiums arose from this successful commercial activity. All of this placed the media at the heart of sport modernisation.¹⁶ Not only was money flowing into sports in greater volume than ever before, this was also the time when other more marginal sports were being transformed by commercial opportunity. Colour television helped snooker to become more popular which led to a marked change for the players, promoters and sponsors. The likes of Steve Davis, Alex Higgins and later Stephen Hendry became wealthy as well as household names. Turner prominently noted in his study of the 1980s how Davis' manager, Barry Hearn

...was perhaps the first man in Britain to see where the real money was to be made in sport: not simply in winning tournaments, or even appearing in the occasional advert... but in the corporate world that was largely invisible to the mainstream public.¹⁷

According to Hearn, "Davis's work is endorsements, company days, promotion back-up", something considered the "the very embodiment of Thatcherite values: the cult of the entrepreneur and the celebration of big money deals".¹⁸ As we started to see in the previous chapter, and will continue to in this, mountaineers could similarly find rich opportunity by effectively engaging with the corporate world.

Changing patterns in tourism also had a material effect on mountaineering careers. Increasing financial freedoms for some in society, and growth in pilgrimage tourism, led to holiday destinations

¹⁶ Dilwyn Porter, 'British Sport Transformed: Sport, Business, and the Media since 1960', in Richard Coopey and Peter Lyth, eds., *Business in Britain in the Twentieth Century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 347-349.

¹⁷ Turner, *Rejoice*, 2981.

¹⁸ Ibid., 3000

taking in notable sporting locations across the globe.¹⁹ Similarly, as adventure-tourism became more popular – attributed to the intentional pursuit of risk in otherwise relatively risk-averse Western societies – there was an inevitability behind the rising demands for non-climbers to experience these outdoors environments.²⁰ Additionally, the macro-economic circumstances have been cited as an influence in outdoor tourism by Higham, Thompson-Carr and Musa who explained that “Accelerating since the 1980s due to expanding influence of neoliberal economic policies, nature-based tourism has rapidly developed into a mass-produced capitalist industry”.²¹ With mountaineering relatively open to entrepreneurial activity (unlike a closed off sport with heavy governance), it was simply a matter of when, not if, demand for guided climbing would take off and how the sport would accommodate it.

So it was that the growing entrepreneurial efforts of different types of climbers capitalised on this transformed environment. The potential to widen mainstream interest in climbing was taken up, and new innovative ways of connecting with audiences were embraced. This was being conducted in a niche sport that was still nimble and responsive to good entrepreneurial ideas. The most prominent group which showed continuity from earlier periods was the professional elite climber. In an extension from the 1970s, the Himalayas remained the key mountain range but the era also saw some hopeful professional climbers take on new challenges in the Alps. As the mainstay career climber of earlier years, Bonington reinforced his position and his public standing with a series of expeditions, including his own ascent of Everest in 1985. However, the climbs on Menlungtse in China and Sepu Kangri in Tibet again demonstrated his publicity and climbing abilities, and broad appeal.

¹⁹ For instance, see Jean Williams, ‘The Indianapolis 500: Making the Pilgrimage to the “Yard of Bricks”’, in Jeffrey Hill, Kevin Moore and Jason Wood, eds., *Sport, History and Heritage: An Investigation into the Public Representation of Sport*, (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 247-262.

²⁰ Elizabeth Rosen, ‘Somalis Don’t Climb Mountains: The Commercialization of Mount Everest’, *The Journal of Popular Culture* 40, no. 1 (2007), 147-157.

²¹ Ghazali Musa, James Higham and Anna Thompson-Carr, eds., *Mountaineering Tourism*, (London: Routledge, 2015), 4.

Elite climbers

Bonington on Menlungtse

In 1988 Chris Bonington led an expedition to the unclimbed 7,181m peak in Tibet known as Menlungtse. He had visited the mountain and attempted to climb it the previous year with Jim Fotheringham and two Norwegian climbing partners, although bad weather rebutted their summit attempts.²² This mountain was attractive from a climbing perspective because it was high, visually appealing, offered challenging climbing and, since it had only been opened to foreign climbers within the previous few years, had not been climbed by Westerners before. Indeed, referring to Eric Shipton and Pete Boardman's separate comments on the peak, Bonington stated that "In the quest for virgin peaks, no mountaineer would want a better recommendation".²³

Given the nature, scale and difficulty of the peak, funding was required. Unlike his earlier expeditions where funding was sought to cover costs, Bonington realised that the expedition itself might turn a profit should there be sufficient interest in it. After a round of sponsorship requests, Bonington managed to attract backing from various sources including the *Mail on Sunday*, the BBC (whose Natural History team made a documentary)²⁴ and bookmaker William Hill,²⁵ showing the popularity and real breadth of interest in the expedition. Although climbing the peak was the first interest for the climbers, it was the novelty aspect of Yeti-hunting that really attracted such prominent backers and played into wider social curiosity around the supernatural.²⁶ All of the backers were interested in the

²² Chris Bonington, 'Menlungtse', *Alpine Journal* 94 (1989-90), 30.

²³ Chris Bonington, 'Menlungtse, 1987', *Himalayan Journal* 44 (1988), online <https://www.himalayanclub.org/hj/44/6/menlungtse-1987> (accessed July 25, 2016).

²⁴ 'Tibet Expedition 1988: Financial Statement for Period 1 October 1987 to 31 May 1989', MHT, CBO/01/24/02/01.

²⁵ Letter from G. Sharpe to Chris Bonington, January 20, 1988, MHT, CBO/01/24/02/02.

²⁶ Tom Neuhaus, 'Of Yetis and Men: Representations of Tibet and the Himalayas, c. 1929-1953', in Rosalind Crone, David Gange and Katy Jones, eds., *New Perspectives in British Cultural History*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 42-4.

idea of hunting for the Yeti, a famous 'footprint' of which had allegedly been found in the Himalayas by Eric Shipton and Mike Ward in 1951 and generated much interest.

Although Bonington and the other climbers, including Alan Hinkes and Andy Fanshawe, were interested in the expedition because the peak had not been summited before and was a genuine mountaineering challenge, this was not to be their only ambition. When outlining the expedition's priorities in late 1987, Bonington remarked that they were firstly:

To make a first class film for television of our attempt on Menlungtse and the area around the mountain with its fauna, flora and people, paying particular attention to the sightings of possible yeti footprints... In parallel with this the four man climbing team will attempt an ascent of Menlungtse using Alpine style tactics without fixed ropes.²⁷

The relegation of the summit efforts to an additional objective in this statement was a reflection on how much public interest they would be likely to attract if the climb itself was the sole aim.

Whether or not the climbers truly believed the Yeti tales, this was the feature that attracted substantial media interest. Furthermore, it was an important part of the expedition's planning. The two principal backers – the *Mail on Sunday* and the BBC – evidently wanted to protect their interests and involvement in the climb, ensuring that stories were not spoiled. In recognition of the worldwide value of evidence – particularly photographs – of a Yeti, the *Mail on Sunday* insisted on a contract with the expedition's climbers which would protect use of any images. Interest from the *Mail on Sunday* saw the newspaper revisiting the subject that was the focus of an earlier expedition sponsored by the *Daily Mail* in 1954 which met with, as Neuhaus has found, a rather critical reception.²⁸

²⁷ 'Menlungtse Expedition 1988 – Outline Plan', October 10, 1987, MHT, CBO/01/24/01.

²⁸ Neuhaus notes how the expedition was subject to the following from *Punch*: "There are fascinating footprints in the snows of Katmandu (sic) / On a slightly less than super-human scale: / There are numerous conjectures on the owner of the shoe / And the money it has cost the *Daily Mail*". Neuhaus, 'Of Yetis and Men', 43.

The climbers were reminded in a pre-expedition meeting that “under the terms of the contract with Mail Newspapers, the first photograph of the Yeti, should there be one, must appear in the MAIL ON SUNDAY”.²⁹ From here, the paper would be responsible for syndication of such images, with the expedition receiving 60% of any proceeds, and 40% to Mail Newspapers.³⁰ The BBC also wished to protect their investment in terms of Yeti-material. They noted that the post-expedition BBC film would take some time to put together and they therefore asked that:

When people were writing articles, they would be careful what they said, especially about the probable content of the film. This would be particularly applicable if they had no film of the yeti or its footprints. Too much pre-publicity saying they did not get any yeti footage would not be a good thing.³¹

The emphasis from the sponsors on the Yeti rather than a potential success on an unclimbed peak illustrated their priorities. However, despite the prominence of the Yeti angle, the fact that the peak was unclimbed was also considered a marketable commodity. In a progress update in late 1987 before any major sponsors had been found it was recorded that expedition member Jess Stock “is trying Richard Branson – Virgin for a lovely Virgin peak with a promise of planting a ‘Mate’ (Branson’s new brand of condoms) on the summit!!?”³²

The commitments to the sponsors were important in funding the climb, but certainly compromised the climbing objective. The filming arrangements with the BBC seriously hampered the climbers. Fanshawe noted how this commitment “left everybody with giant sacks full of BBC film cartridges...

²⁹ ‘Minutes of Menlungtse Expedition 1988 Meeting’, February 20, 1988, CBO/01/24/01.

³⁰ Signed agreement between Chris Bonington and *Mail on Sunday* signature dated December 31, 1987 and January 4, 1988, MHT, CBO/01/24/02/01.

³¹ ‘Minutes of Menlungtse Expedition 1988 Meeting’, February 20, 1988, MHT, CBO/01/24/01.

³² ‘Menlungtse Expedition 1988 – Planning Progress Brief’, November 11, 1987, MHT, CBO/01/24/01.

leaving little room for 'peripheral luxuries' such as food".³³ However, the climbers could hardly begrudge this too much, for the BBC's net sponsorship cost to the expedition was over £56,000, with the *Mail on Sunday* putting up a further £7,646.³⁴

The growing influence of sponsors was, though, the nature of expeditioning in this era. In the 1970s Bonington had expressed concern about this, explaining that:

The risk of sponsorship is that all too easily you can find your original concept of a climb being changed – the size of the team increased, the timetable altered, more gear to lug up and so on. Most pernicious of all is the filming, for all too soon you can find that instead of the film fitting round the climb, you have to adjust the climb to meet the voracious demands of making a film.³⁵

This had now become almost inescapable if one wanted to run a slightly more obscure expedition that would attract the public and even turn a profit. Before the expedition's departure, Bonington recorded that he was in discussions with bookmaker William Hill regarding a £5,000 sponsorship, and that even prior to this being agreed "They've already laid odds of 150-1 against our finding the yeti and there's been a lot of media interest in this".³⁶ In terms of publicity and mainstream interest, this sponsorship arrangement was vital. The bookmaker supported the expedition in return for using it as a publicity vehicle and for promotional arrangements. A letter from William Hill representative Graham Sharpe to Bonington read "could we also assume that you and your colleagues would mention the William Hill betting element in the expedition whenever possible in interviews with the media?"³⁷ The climbers

³³ Andy Fanshawe, 'The Ascent of Menlungtse West', *Alpine Journal* 94 (1989-90), 35.

³⁴ 'Tibet Expedition 1988: Financial Statement for Period 1 October 1987 to 31 May 1989', (undated), MHT, CBO/01/24/02/01.

³⁵ Ronald Clark, *Men, Myths and Mountains*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1976), 272.

³⁶ 'Newsletter 1', December 21, 1987, MHT, CBO/01/24/01.

³⁷ Letter from Graham Sharpe to Chris Bonington, December 2, 1987, MHT, CBO/01/24/02/02.

duly obliged, particularly after the expedition, which successfully climbed to the west summit of Menlungtse but not the main summit. In the aftermath coverage from the national press frequently referred to William Hill's role.³⁸ This was not limited to the written media, and after their return the expedition was discussed on BBC programming such as "Rush Hour", "AM" and "Newsbeat".³⁹ Demonstrating the momentum of this, even *The Times* noted William Hill's post-expedition odds (by now much shorter) of 66-1 of Yeti evidence being discovered by the end of the year.⁴⁰

Without a doubt, the publicity generated by the expedition was substantial. The use of the Yeti story gave a Himalayan expedition that may otherwise be of interest only to the climbing community, a widespread appeal and perhaps an element of fun. Given the general acceptance by this point of commercial interests, business backing and professionally-minded climbers within the sport, there was little criticism of the climb or the novelty angle amongst the climbing press. To some it was perhaps viewed a little condescendingly – for example commentator and historian Audrey Salkeld described the expedition as "Bonington's yeti-hunting expedition".⁴¹ However, the expedition accounts in the climbing press had a very different focus to the mainstream. In their accounts of the climb published in the *Alpine Journal*, Fanshawe and Bonington made very little reference to the Yeti hunt. In his technical description of the climb, Bonington noted almost reluctantly that the 1988 team including the BBC and *Mail on Sunday* members were "all bent on hunting the yeti".⁴² Fanshawe also expressed his own tiredness of the Yeti angle when he explained that the "BBC and *Mail on Sunday* newspaper came too, to ensure that we spent at least some of our time searching for the Yeti".⁴³

³⁸ For example, 'Yeti is a Bet Even Yet', *Daily Record*, June 9, 1988, MHT, CBO/01/24/06.

³⁹ 'Yeti Eludes His Hunters', Tellex Report for *Rush Hour*, BBC, June 9, 1988, MHT, CBO/01/24/06; 'In Search of the Yeti', Tellex Report for "AM", June 8, 1988, MHT, CBO/01/24/06; 'Yeti Hunters Return Home', Tellex Report for "Newsbeat", August 6, 1988, MHT, CBO/01/24/06.

⁴⁰ Boris Johnson, 'Yeti Hunters Show a Pile of Evidence', *The Times*, May 9, 1988.

⁴¹ Audrey Salkeld, 'People', *Mountain* 122 (1988), 41.

⁴² Bonington, 'Menlungtse', 30.

⁴³ Andy Fanshawe, 'Of Mice and Menlungtse', *Mountain* 123 (1988), 20.

The sponsorship from the three main sources allowed the expedition to take place and fulfil its objectives as best as possible. Unlike in the earlier period, where such sponsorship was nothing more than an enabler, by this time some expeditions could actually turn a profit, with business arrangements in place to share any surplus. The Menlungtse 1988 expedition, thanks to the generous BBC backing, very effective sales pitch and publicity generation,⁴⁴ made a modest profit of some £16,634, of which Chris Bonington received almost £7,000 and the other expedition members received around £2,000 to go alongside other income they could generate afterwards using their own enhanced reputations.⁴⁵ Whilst the 1960s saw climbers paid after the event in return for their story, and the 1970s saw expeditions funded in return for rights and sometimes an arbitrary climber salary, by the 1980s expeditions that were effectively run could sell the story beforehand, add on other profitable elements, and keep any surplus. This change in business opportunity although not available for many, reflected the shrewdness with which some expeditions were run.

Undoubtedly selling expeditions to make money was increasingly difficult. Many of the biggest challenges on the world's best-known mountains had been completed, meaning that the wider public may have struggled to understand the importance and technical difficulty of a climb such as Menlungtse. However, by adding something more relatable and broadly interesting to the expedition it became better suited for mainstream coverage and therefore more saleable. Angles such as the Yeti in 1988, which played into an ongoing fascination with the topic dating back to the 1830s as well as wider interest in the 'unknown', could be regarded as gimmicks for they do not relate to the art or progress of mountaineering. In the years after 1988 such gimmicks would be employed more and more frequently as means to gain publicity and commercial backing. This represented a key change in how mountaineering was being portrayed to the public whereby, outside its immediate circles, it was

⁴⁴ Bonington went on to run a 21-date lecture tour in late 1988 sponsored by Berghaus. See advert in *Mountain* 123 (1988), 9.

⁴⁵ 'Tibet Expedition 1988: Financial Statement for period 1 October 1987 to 31 May 1989', (undated), MHT, CBO/01/24/02/01.

not being understood for its climbing accomplishments, but instead for its novelties. A decade later, Bonington capitalised on this experience by finding another innovative way of raising public intrigue in a further unusual climb on Sepu Kangri.

Bonington on Sepu Kangri

On Menlungtse, Bonington had shown his aptitude for broadening his expeditions to maximise the publicity they might bring. He had adapted with the times, starting to understand the importance of this in the 1960s and continuing into the mid-to-late-1990s in a series of expeditions to Sepu Kangri in Tibet. This mountain, rising to almost 7,000m, was again unclimbed, but one that had struck Bonington by its beauty and the lesser-visited region it was situated in. What was notable about this expedition was again that substantial publicity was generated for what was, to the lay person, an ordinary mountaineering expedition to an unremarkable peak. Despite this, the expeditions received generous backing, sponsorship and commercial opportunities. This was achieved by employing another novel angle – IT.

Bonington had a fondness for using computers in expeditions. He was not alone in this interest in the climbing community – Ian MacNaught Davis being heavily involved in a computing company in the 1970s.⁴⁶ In the expedition he led to Everest in 1975 Bonington realised that computers could help in the planning of climbs. As he described later:

I didn't know a thing about computers at that stage but I thought you should be able to write a program for the logistics... We worked out the loads people could carry and then I changed the number of people, moved people from camp to camp, played in failure rates and automatic food consumption and oxygen bottle consumption. By playing this through several

⁴⁶ Colin Wells, *Who's Who in British Climbing*, (Buxton: The Climbing Company Ltd, 2008), 300.

times I could get a real feel of what the logistics problems were going to be. So on the mountain I had them well and truly in my head.⁴⁷

He used an Apple computer on Everest at 22,500ft a decade later and again acknowledged the benefits of computing to mountaineering.⁴⁸ Computers and the internet became the latest novelty that Bonington employed to attract publicity for his Sepu Kangri expeditions in 1997 and particularly in 1998.

The appendices to Bonington's book which followed the expeditions made plain the role of technology on the mountain:

The mobile satellite telephone, e-mail, and the ability to transmit digital still and video images has changed one important aspect of mountaineering and exploration in remote areas: communication with the outside world is potentially instant and global... In our case, the ability to relay information to a wider audience was primarily for our sponsors, via the Sepu Kangri website... and via ITN news bulletins. These encouraged anyone interested to follow our progress.⁴⁹

The IT angle was there to exploit. For the 1997 expedition, the team wanted the expedition to be seen as innovative, explaining to potential sponsors the appeal of "association with a high profile expedition that exemplifies exploration, innovation and adventure with a range of attractive sponsorship".⁵⁰ Such an approach for securing sponsorship was shrewd, and it fitted with best-practice that was made available at the time.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Steve Homer, 'A Pinnacle of Computer Achievement', *The Independent*, November 27, 1989.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Chris Bonington and Charles Clarke, *Tibet's Secret Mountain: The Triumph of Sepu Kangri*, (London: Phoenix, 1999), 226.

⁵⁰ 'British Sepu Kangri Expedition 1997 – Press Release', undated, MHT, CBO/01/35/01/02.

⁵¹ For instance, the Sports Sponsorship Advisory Service explained in 2000 that "When submitting a sponsorship proposal ensure the commercial benefits are clearly stated, specific, deliverable and give value for money". Quote from Sarah

The desired public interest materialised and a considerable amount of publicity was raised. Prior to the 1997 expedition departing, Bonington reported to Duncan Sperry who was involved in the technical set up on the expedition that the website had received 150,000 hits and that “Radio 5 live want to do a weekly live link up!!!”⁵² Bonington gave a number of interviews in the lead up to the expedition where again he reiterated the role of technology and the website and therefore encouraged more mainstream reporting, for instance *The Independent* covered the expedition planning. An article in the paper explained how “Bonington admits that he is fascinated by the potential of the Web. ‘It means that our little expedition can communicate directly with anyone in the world who wants to turn on their computer and look at the Web site’”, whilst the article also explained the other technologies employed by the expedition.⁵³ Evidently the ability to give near real-time updates rather than rely on the printed media (and getting stories to them) was paying dividends, and the post-expedition report noted how the site had over 400,000 hits and received 1,000 emails.⁵⁴ Other papers including *The Mirror* and *The Sunday Mirror* also covered the climb before its departure.⁵⁵

This, coupled with the acknowledged interest that Bonington’s involvement alone brought, ensured that sponsors were interested in the climb.⁵⁶ Reaching a wide audience was paramount to the expedition and to attract sponsorship so that potential sponsors might realise how widely their image would be seen, or how their association with the expedition might be perceived. Some potential sponsors were still wary though. Reflecting the issue that the climb was unknown, Royal Bank of

Mackie, Manager – Sponsorship & Charities at Royal Bank of Scotland, Sports Sponsorship Advisory Service, ‘Making Sponsorship a Success’, (London: Central Council of Physical Recreation, 2000), 14-1.

⁵² Letter from Chris Bonington to Duncan Sperry, April 14, 1997, MHT, CBO/01/35/01/02.

⁵³ Stephen Pritchard, ‘Network: Tibet Netted’, *The Independent*, April 22, 1997.

⁵⁴ ‘Into the Unknown: British Sepu Kangri Expedition Report 1997’, 1997, Royal Geographical Society, RGS-3283, 2.

⁵⁵ For example, see David Hancock, ‘Bonington’s Lap-top is Really High Tech’, *Sunday Mirror*, April 27, 1997. Clinton Manning, ‘He’s Top of the Range’, *The Mirror*, April 14, 1997.

⁵⁶ Ed Douglas, ‘The Shrinking World: Climb Every Mountain’, *The Observer*, August 4, 1996.

Scotland declined to be involved in sponsoring the expedition because “it was felt that the return for such a big sponsorship was over a relatively short period of time and in a very narrow market”.⁵⁷ However, the 1997 expedition benefitted from the relatively small donations of several companies including outdoor equipment manufacturers Coleman and Silva, as well as a substantial contribution from one individual which ultimately paid the way for the climb without the need for any more headline sponsorship.⁵⁸

The 1997 climb was unsuccessful, reaching around 6000m before being forced back by bad weather. But the core team of Bonington and Charles Clarke were keen to revisit the mountain the next year and the funding arrangements were being discussed not long after the 1997 expedition returned. A press relations company involved in the project was keen to pursue options to generate further publicity by following the technology angle once more, including sending synopses to the BBC’s *Tomorrow’s World*, and the programmes *Computers Don’t Bite* and *The Computer Channel*. Other ideas included interviews in technology sections of lifestyle magazines and a branded lecture potentially entitled “Email at 20,000 feet”.⁵⁹

Building on their successful sponsorship and publicity from the 1988 Menlungtse expedition, William Hill supported the 1998 climb and again offered Bonington odds, this time on him reaching the summit – something William Hill was keen to highlight in their press release where they explained:

Sir Chris Bonington became the first climber ever to bet on himself reaching the summit of a mountain... bookmakers William Hill have offered him odds of 10/1 to successfully scale the

⁵⁷ Letter from Mike Hutchins (RBS) to Chris Bonington, December 2, 1996, MHT, CBO/01/35/01/02.

⁵⁸ Fax from Jim Lowther to Chris Bonington containing expedition accounts, July 31, 1997, MHT, CBO/01/35/01/01.

⁵⁹ Briefing entitled ‘Claris – Sepu Kangri PR follow up’, July 22, 1997, MHT, CBO/01/35/01/02.

heights of his forthcoming British Sepu Kangri Expedition and he has placed £1000 on himself.⁶⁰

Curiously this £1000 was the same amount that the bookmakers paid to be sponsors.⁶¹ The bookmaker could not resist returning to the Yeti question, and went on to say that “he also stands to collect £100,000 from William Hill if the Expedition returns with conclusive evidence of the existence of the Yeti, after staking a second bet of £500 at 200/1”.⁶²

National Express were the expedition headline sponsor appearing on letterheads for the climb,⁶³ in exchange for £50,000 sponsorship, whilst ITN also contributed some £5,000.⁶⁴ Unlike in earlier years, logos clearly displaying the headline sponsor were shown on items of clothing during the expedition documentary screened after their return, as was some advertising for Coleman.⁶⁵ Again, newspaper coverage discussed IT as well as the age of Bonington who was by now in his mid-60s.⁶⁶ The expedition was a partial success, with expedition members Scott Muir and Victor Saunders reaching the mountain’s west summit, but for ITN the expedition and its regular video updates were a triumph – “I’m really sorry that the venture didn’t end with you making it to the top but in terms of ITN’s interest it was a huge success for us”, they wrote to Bonington.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ William Hill press release, August 26, 1998, MHT, CBO/01/36/01/09.

⁶¹ ‘British Sepu Kangri 1998: Cash received’, August 27, 1998, MHT, CBO/01/36/01/03.

⁶² William Hill press release, August 26, 1998, MHT, CBO/01/36/01/09.

⁶³ Bonington and Clarke, ‘Tibet’s Secret Mountain’, 240; Proposal agreement between Expedition and Northern Films, undated, MHT, CBO/01/36/01/09.

⁶⁴ ‘British Sepu Kangri 1998: Cash received’, August 27, 1998, MHT, CBO/01/36/01/03.

⁶⁵ *Bonington’s Secret Mountain*, Directed by Martin Belderson, Northern Films (UK) Ltd, 1999.

⁶⁶ For example, see Matthew Brace, ‘Bonington’s Last Big Challenge: The Secret Summit of Tibet’, *The Independent*, January 26, 1998; ‘Uncharted Peak Lures Explorer to Tibet’, *The Times*, August 29, 1998; Ed Johnson, ‘A Lofty New Challenge as Bonington Reaches 64’, *The Scotsman*, August 20, 1998; ‘On Top of the World with a Trusty Laptop’, *Sunday Mirror*, November 22, 1998.

⁶⁷ Letter from Vicky Knighton (ITN) to Chris Bonington, October 23, 1998, MHT, CBO/01/36/01/09.

Whilst 1997 saw a large sum invested by one individual to pay for the bulk of the expedition, the commercial imperative was greater in 1998 and the website and materials reflected this. Not everyone viewed this in a positive light though. John Naughton, writing in *The Observer*, pointed an accusing finger towards Bonington and the commercial elements of the climb. Speaking about the 1997 climb, he quoted the website as reading “Whether you have a climbing or a business interest, Bonington web is the definitive guide to one of the world’s greatest mountaineers” before asking pointedly what such ‘business interest’ might be.⁶⁸ Naughton’s heaviest rebuke was aimed at the commercial aspects of the website, noting the range of merchandise and books available to purchase – “No market niche is left unexplored, no merchandising crevasse remains unbridged. Why, when he’s not shinning up precipitous slopes, Chris even sells himself!” in reference to options for hiring Bonington to make corporate business speeches on issues of leadership and perseverance.⁶⁹ These comments by Naughton were nothing new for Bonington, who had experienced criticism for making money from mountaineering communications throughout his career, and – as noted in the introduction – he was not the first sportsperson to be linking more explicitly with the corporate world. Now though, voices such as Naughton’s were less influential and tended to find their marks on genuine client guided expeditions, discussed later, with their own ‘first’ novelty factor. In any case, such comments had little effect on the commercial and financial successes of the climbs, which went to show that, with an attractive angle, expeditions to lesser-known mountains in unfamiliar places could raise a notable amount.

As with the Menlungtse expedition a decade earlier, sponsorship for the 1998 Sepu Kangri climb not only covered the costs, but helped make it profitable. The expedition member’s agreement detailed how any profit was to be split, but at the outset of the expedition Bonington and Charles Clarke underwrote the climb. They committed to this personal outlay prior to obtaining any sponsorship, but

⁶⁸ John Naughton, ‘The Internet: The Hills are Alive with the Sound of... Chris Bonington Making Money’, *The Observer*, May 4, 1997.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

noted that even without this in place, “the budget is £100,000 and Chris is ever optimistic that he can raise this money”. Interestingly, the role of television was critical as the agreement note went to say that raising the money would be “dependent on Television coming on board to attract the sponsorship”.⁷⁰

Whilst Bonington and Clarke covered the costs, team members could choose to become formal stakeholders in the expedition by contributing £1,000, thus earning them a share of any profit at the end of the expedition. To recover their initial outlay, Bonington and Clarke would receive the first £5,000 of potential profit each, before the MEF and BMC grants would be repaid. Any remaining profits would be returned at different percentages depending on how much profit was received, with the first £10,000 surplus being split 90% to Bonington and Clarke and 10% to the stakeholders, the next £10,000 split 80% to 20% and anything over split 70% to 30%. As in other expeditions, the climbers’ contract insisted that team members “agree to refrain from making any deals with suppliers, the media or other organisations before, during or after the expedition without first consulting Chris”.⁷¹ This was an innovative approach and one that likely brought the climbers into the idea that they could benefit financially, encouraging a commercial and professional approach by becoming business investors in their own service and product.

Being a niche sport had afforded mountaineering opportunities to be innovative in publicity and media connections. Wheaton and Gilchrist have pointed out how this was the case for climbing as well as other sports such as surfing and, more recently, parkour.⁷² Whilst they note how lifestyle sports have promoted use of new technologies, such as in ESPN’s X Games, Bonington’s Sepu Kangri expeditions were very early examples of the use of the internet and IT to bring mountaineering to the consumer.⁷³

⁷⁰ ‘British Sepu Kangri Expedition 1998: Finance and Individual Commitment’, undated, MHT, CBO/01/36/01/03.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Paul Gilchrist and Belinda Wheaton, ‘New Media Technologies in Lifestyle Sport’, in Brett Hutchins and David Rowe, eds., *Digital Media Sport: Technology, Power and Culture in the Network Society*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 169-185.

⁷³ Ibid., 170.

This would be a forerunner to later expeditions that used similar IT approaches, and today's more recent social media led efforts which have become more and more appealing and acceptable to climbers and the wider public.⁷⁴ These two Bonington examples sit at each end of the era covered in this chapter, but alongside Bonington stood another established elite climber, Doug Scott. Scott tended not to optimise new technology, but found his own way of balancing his personal ethics with pursuing a climbing career.

Doug Scott

Throughout his climbing career Doug Scott sat in a peculiar professional position. On the one hand, he strongly denied selling out to commercial pressures, but on the other hand he did take up sponsorship and other professional options such as lecturing, photography and writing for journals and magazines. In a group interview, reported in *Mountain* in 1986, Scott and Reinhold Messner shared a revealing exchange:⁷⁵

Messner: Who never sold himself to publicity? No one!

Scott: It is a question of degree. Effectively on the Continent very few haven't done it. But in England...no one apart from Bonington.

Messner: I have often seen your name in adverts in the papers!

Scott: We need equipment; if Berghaus gives us sacs for an expedition the product is associated with the mountain rather than the person. No one is forgotten and the approach is much better. The majority of manufacturers prefer it that way.

⁷⁴ For instance see Alex Lowther, 'On Ledge and Online: Solitary Sport Turns Social', *New York Times*, December 10, 2011, online: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/10/sports/as-climbers-go-text-it-on-the-mountain-reaction-is-divided.html> (accessed July 17, 2013).

⁷⁵ 'Messner Summit', *Mountain* 109 (1986), 40.

Messner: How would the English have been able to do Annapurna or Everest if Bonington hadn't prepared the ground?

Scott: The English frequently went to Everest from 1921 onwards and not one of them, save Chris Bonington, sold himself! It's absurd! You are only trying to justify yourself.

Messner: [throwing his pencil] Absolutely not, I have no need of that!

Despite such comments and denial of commercial importance, Scott was in some ways involved in some of Britain's more business-minded expeditions, not least the big wall expeditions in the Himalayas covered in Chapter Three. Although he took such opportunities, he did resent aspects of it, and certainly had a preference for smaller-scale, more private climbs. Indeed, Scott had strong climbing ethics which often, but by no means always, determined the expeditions he was involved in. While he was not going to give up his preference for lightweight climbing, his views on what was acceptable in terms of commercialisation and guiding did change from the 1980s. This was in part forced by the new, costly areas of the world he climbed in, such as Bhutan.

Scott's 1982 expedition to the world's fourteenth highest peak, Shishapangma, set the scene and, although lightweight, still required sponsorship (as discussed in Chapter Three). It demonstrated how compromise was becoming necessary. In 1986 Doug Scott was again struggling to find backing for an expedition, this time to Gangkhar Puensum, a 7,570m peak in Bhutan. Funding needs were not helped by the high daily fees charged by the Bhutanese government of between \$85 and \$200.⁷⁶ Such were these costs that Scott was prepared to forego his more amateur-aligned ideals when he told the *Guardian* that "I've never had a sponsor for the expeditions I've organised but this time the costs really

⁷⁶ Doug Scott, 'Bhutan – A Summary of Climbing and the Anglo-Indian Ascent of Jitchu Drake', *Alpine Journal* 94 (1989-90), 38.

are high”.⁷⁷ Indeed, the same *Guardian* article outlined the issue of sponsorship availability throughout the sport, proclaiming that:

The great and noble tradition of British mountaineering in the Himalayas is threatened by lack of funds. This year, two teams are planning attempts on new routes, but neither has yet attracted a sponsor.⁷⁸

The issue reflected the wider public interest in the sport, and the difficulties that climbers had affording expeditions to peaks that the general public knew less about. Eventually a British expedition to Gangkhar Puensum, which obtained nearly £20,000 in media sponsorship from a combination of the *Sunday Times* and a film crew shooting a film to be shown on Channel 4,⁷⁹ did go ahead in 1986 though Scott did not join.⁸⁰ However, he was to return in 1988 to a nearby highly regarded Bhutanese peak named Jitchu Drake rising to just under 7,000m which had witnessed several previous unsuccessful attempts.⁸¹ The funding challenges remained and in an *Alpine Journal* article Scott noted that just a month from departure in 1988 “our expedition had received generous donations of equipment necessary for the climb, but very little in the way of funds”.⁸² Scott noted that it was only a last minute backing from *The Guardian* that enabled the climb. The newspaper, who wanted to continue their “part sponsorship of our attempt on the NE ridge of Everest the previous autumn with full sponsorship of another climb”,⁸³ sent David Rose along with the climbing team to report on the

⁷⁷ David Rose, ‘Sponsors Leave British Climbers Up in the Air’, *The Guardian*, March 31, 1986.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ ‘The British Bhutan Expedition 1986’ expedition report, 1986, Alan Rouse Library, RGS627E, 3, 8, 9.

⁸⁰ See Steven K Berry, *The Thunder Dragon Kingdom: A Mountaineering Expedition to Bhutan*, (Marlborough: Crowood Press, 1988).

⁸¹ Mountaineering on Gangkhar Puensum was not permitted by the Bhutanese government in 1988.

⁸² Scott, ‘Bhutan – A Summary’, 39.

⁸³ Ibid.

expedition,⁸⁴ and at the same time continued their close relationship between the newspaper and the sport that dated back to the nineteenth-century.⁸⁵

It is interesting to note that, like Bonington and his association with Barclays' Alan Tritton in 1975, it was the pre-existing association between the *Guardian's* managing director (Jim Markwick) and Scott that influenced the paper's backing of the climb.⁸⁶ The *Guardian's* sponsorship of the Jitchu Drake climb led to eight articles and over 10,000 words in the newspaper between April and June 1988. The articles ranged from an initial explanation of the climb and profile of the climbers,⁸⁷ to descriptions of the climb, to a post-expedition summary.⁸⁸ On numerous occasions they described the climb as "*The Guardian Bhutan Expedition*".⁸⁹

When first planning a Bhutan expedition, Scott considered the idea of a trek which would help to fund the climb, and this was an idea followed through in 1988 with the opportunity promoted in *High* magazine.⁹⁰ Despite reservations about leading in this way and having more serious worries about high-altitude guiding, Scott declared that the trek had "proved to be a very pleasant and interesting experience".⁹¹ This was not the only time that Scott would guide others to fund his climbs. In the early 1990s Scott, along with two other climbers, climbed Mount Vinson, the highest peak in Antarctica at 4,892 metres. A trip to such an inhospitable part of the world certainly had its costs, so the expedition

⁸⁴ Douglas Scott, 'Jitchu Drake, First Ascent to the Main Peak', *American Alpine Journal*, (1989), 184.

⁸⁵ Paul Gilchrist, 'Mountains, Manliness and Post-war Recovery: C. E. Montague's "Action"', *Sport in History* 33, no. 3 (2013), 282-302; J. H. Westaway, "'Fair Play Among Holiday-Makers": C. E. Montague's Editorial Representations of Mountaineering Tourism in the "Manchester Guardian" 1890-1925', Conference paper, June 2003, University of Central Lancashire Tourisms and Histories Conference, 2003.

⁸⁶ Richard Nelsson, ed., *On the Roof of the World: The Guardian Book of Mountains* (London: Guardian Books. 2012), Kindle edition, location 2955.

⁸⁷ David Rose, 'Into the Teeth of the Dragon', *The Guardian*, April 2, 1988.

⁸⁸ David Rose, 'The Conquest of Jitchu Drake', *The Guardian*, June 10, 1988.

⁸⁹ For instance, David Rose, 'The Guardian Bhutan Expedition: Weather Fair to Tame the Angry Bird', *The Guardian*, June 3, 1988.

⁹⁰ 'Doug Scott on Another Himalayan Marathon', *High* 64 (1988), 13.

⁹¹ Scott, 'Bhutan – A Summary', 38, 43.

essentially became a commercial one, with six clients taken at a cost of £14,000 each. This did not turn a profit for the organisers, “but it made it possible to get down there”.⁹² Scott was clearly wary of the responsibility of guiding a party like this, but at the same time did not intend to haul clients up the mountain, a hint towards his truer ethical stance despite this step into commercial practices. For Scott, this was regarded as a “one off” which made the trip possible, remarking that “we weren’t really interested in guiding”.⁹³ Nonetheless, acting as a guide to a climbing party such as this was starting to blur the lines between high-achieving elite mountaineering and the role of professional guiding.

Having a newspaper back the expedition in 1988 was a reversion to the older style of funding prominent in the 1953-1969 period, and even earlier where *The Times*, *Guardian*, *Daily Mail* and others had each backed expeditions at one time. Selling his expeditions to this form of media coverage, rather than combined contributions from diverse companies, meant Scott’s budget was constrained and required personally funding the climbs to some extent, though for Scott even this type of financial sponsorship was a major consideration. For instance, 1984 expeditions to Makalu and Chamlang saw some £1,200 contributions per person, paid for by working as carpenters and electricians.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, the need for additional funding, despite taking the relatively cheap option of alpine style climbing, meant he needed wider appeal than just the climbing community, and newspapers were perhaps not as drastic a step forward towards full corporate and commercial interests that had been seen in the 1970s.

Scott was finding sponsorship difficult to obtain because of the wider changes in perception of mountaineering and his desire to attempt potentially more genuine mountaineering challenges, rather than select expeditions that had high public appeal. This was not a peculiarly British problem. French elite climber and author Pierre Beghin noted in the mid-1980s that the same was true on the

⁹² Doug Scott interviewed by Alan Hankinson, c. 1992-1993, MHT, AHA/3/2/15.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ ‘Messner Summit’, *Mountain* 109 (1986), 40.

continent – “If one takes Gasherbrum IV [a sub-8000m peak] as an example, it is totally impossible to find the money in France as it is completely unknown to the general public”.⁹⁵ Compounding the problems was the changing interest of media reporting. With the growth of non-elite client climbers, newspapers were, broadly speaking, less interested in the unknown mountains with which the wider public could not so easily relate, and more so in unusual and novelty backstories for which Scott’s approach was less directed.

Despite these pressures, Scott could still earn a living from the sport. In this sense, lecturing and writing were important sources of revenue. In an interview with Alan Hankinson, he explained that he lectured in October and November – the climbing ‘off-season’ and typically the time of climbing festivals at which lectures were an important part – and again at the start of the next year.⁹⁶ He also spoke with Hankinson about the publicity for his 1991 book, *Himalayan Climber*.⁹⁷ Lecturing and literature were fairly staple elements for elite professional mountaineers in earlier years and remained a reliable source of income reflecting high continuing demand for such material amongst the British public. Scott was professionalising in this way, and judging by the way he spoke, one suspects that he would climb and return home to communicate about his climbs in order to afford his next adventure. In this approach, reliance on lectures and other communications remained very high, even if it was one that had been used for some time.

In several of his expeditions in this and earlier eras, grants from the BMC and MEF contributed to the budget. Since many of Scott’s climbs were more modest than other eye-catching efforts, these grants did help to get expeditions off the ground. Unlike many other sports, mountaineering’s governing bodies – mainly the BMC as representative as well as grant-giver – did not deliberately encourage commercial expeditions at the expense of amateur ones. Upon entering the 1980s there were still

⁹⁵ Ibid., 39

⁹⁶ Doug Scott interviewed by Alan Hankinson, c. 1992-1993, MHT, AHA/3/2/15.

⁹⁷ Doug Scott, *Himalayan Climber: A Lifetime's Quest to the World's Greater Ranges*, (London: Baton Wicks, 1994).

some sports such as athletics which sternly curtailed commercial activities. It was only early in this decade that pressure upon the Amateur Athletics Association grew sufficiently to allow “talented individuals to legally make money from their sport, and allowed the sport’s administrators to make money out of the sport’s appeal”.⁹⁸ There was, though, no push from the centre to raise public or corporate awareness and appreciation for mountaineering. As a result, individuals like Scott needed to supplement such grants by creating income generating opportunities themselves, essentially finding their own markets, and then meeting the potential demand.

For Scott and other elite climbers, unlike participants in many other sports, there was no material career dependence on decisions made by governing bodies. The fleeting and fluctuating nature of earning opportunities that already made this a challenging career option was not helped by the BMC. It did not necessarily oppose commercial activity as such, but no proactive steps were taken and no financial commitments outside of grants, given to elite and amateurs alike, were made to help climbers achieve their career ambitions. Professionalisation in most other sports was as a result of the direct intentions and actions of established bodies, but in mountaineering it was down to the participants themselves to create demand and capitalise on it.

The otherwise limited support for career climbers perhaps explains why mountaineering and climbing remained a relatively niche sport, even if it was expanding. Despite being unwilling to involve itself in actively promoting the sport in a more commercial sense, the BMC was not a protector of amateurism and climbing ethics either. A 2000 report by the Sports Sponsorship Advisory Service highlighted issues facing marginal sports, attributing many of them to governing bodies that had “failed to make them attractive as mainstream media fodder”.⁹⁹ Whilst this is a charge that could be applied in the case of

⁹⁸ Martin Polley, “‘The Amateur Rules’: Amateurism and Professionalism in Post-War British Athletics’, in Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, eds., *Amateurs and Professionals in Post-War British Sport*, (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 83.

⁹⁹ Nick Harris, ‘Sports Sponsorship: More Sex Please, We’re Sponsors’, *The Independent*, August 26, 1999.

mountaineering, the fact that the body did not seek to actively encourage professionalisation positioned them more as bystanders than active participants.

Importantly though, they did not seek to block such modernisation. While other aspects of climbing changed, seeing values replaced and attitudes updated, the BMC rarely intervened in a manner suggesting they wanted to preserve amateur ideals. Though it did occasionally step in to defend some values, for instance in opposing overtly commercial rock climbing competitions in Britain before 1989, it tended to remain neutral about these modernising features, including the growing role of commercial pressure and professionalisation.¹⁰⁰ Whilst some opposition from the wider climbing community, detailed in Chapter Three, continued into the later 1980s – for instance Jim Perrin’s angst around the “sponsored puffery surrounding modern climbing” – career climbers were accepted as part of the community and managed alongside their amateur peers just as they had in earlier decades.¹⁰¹ Scott seemed to have one foot in each of these camps, and a similar mind-set to Al Rouse, who was influential in bridging the amateur and elite divide.

Alan Rouse

Al Rouse had been part of the climbing elite in the 1970s and early 1980s, involved in cutting edge expeditions such as those to Jannu in 1978 and with Doug Scott on the North Buttress of Nuptse in 1979. Although he pursued an amateur ideal throughout his earlier climbing, he had also expeditioned with successful professionally-minded climbers including Bonington on Kongur in 1980 and 1981. By the early 1980s he was building on his own lecturing and literature efforts (which included copious

¹⁰⁰ Geoff Milburn, *The First Fifty Years of the British Mountaineering Council*, (Manchester: British Mountaineering Council, 1997), 85.

¹⁰¹ Ed Douglas, ‘Obituary: Outstanding but Publicity-Shy Young Climber – Will Perrin’, originally published in *The Guardian* September 2, 2004, reprinted in Nelsson, *On the Roof of the World*, 3986.

articles for magazines and journals), with guiding and acting as an equipment consultant.¹⁰² He led and participated in more commercially focussed expeditions, epitomised by a fateful 1986 K2 expedition in which his amateur ideals were somewhat diluted. In trying to grasp the career opportunities of the others around him, he was caught out in a storm on the mountain and died in a high camp after being the first Briton to reach the mountain's summit.

Whilst mountaineering is evidently a risky sport, some expeditions or efforts are even more dangerous than others. In Rouse's case risk and danger may have been pursued in the interest of needing to be successful or achieving a good outcome for sponsors. The K2 climb in 1986 was intended to be the first ever summit via the technically very challenging north-west ridge and to place the first Briton on the mountain's summit. Such was the nature of climbing K2 that alpine style efforts were not deemed to be realistic. Despite different intentions at the outset, the expedition team consisted of eleven members and adopted a fixed rope siege style climb, inevitably resulting in high costs, with portage and equipment coming to some £40,000.¹⁰³ Curiously, the same 1986 *Guardian* article that carried Doug Scott's pleas for backing for his Bhutan expedition also mentioned the anticipated K2 climb and the search for sponsors.¹⁰⁴

The climbers could not afford to self-finance the climb and were wary about making substantial financial commitments – for example, Aid Burgess was alert to the high expense, and his income as a carpenter – although they did give modest personal contributions to obtain the initial permits.¹⁰⁵ As so often seemed to be the case, full funding came together at the last moment. Curran, in his retelling

¹⁰² Anita McConnell, 'Rouse, Alan Paul (1951-1986), mountaineer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/62502> (accessed July 27, 2013).

¹⁰³ John Porter, 'K2 North-West Ridge', in Geoff Birtles, ed., *Alan Rouse: A Mountaineer's Life*, (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1988), 204-209.

¹⁰⁴ David Rose, 'Sponsors Leave British Climbers Up in the Air', *The Guardian*, March 31, 1986.

¹⁰⁵ Adrian Burgess explained, in relation to saving for an expedition, that "I knew I would never have saved enough by earning eight dollars an hour as a carpenter". Adrian Burgess and Alan Burgess, *The Burgess Book of Lies*, (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 2001), 324.

of the climb, noted that sponsorship was difficult to obtain for K2, being the second highest mountain in the world, where “advertising, promotion and production companies don’t like second best”.¹⁰⁶ Thus, Rouse, as expedition leader pitched the expedition as “The World’s Hardest Mountain”, and although Curran challenged this,¹⁰⁷ this type of phraseology caught on, being reflected in press coverage such as the aforementioned *Guardian* article (“the second highest and probably the most challenging and dangerous mountain in the world”).¹⁰⁸ To make the climb more appealing, there were even suggestions that Rouse planned to summit on the same day as Prince Andrew’s royal wedding.¹⁰⁹ This was an illustration of an unusual angle which was increasingly required to encourage sponsorship and media attention, even if John Barry remarked later that it was “a painful reminder of our fatuous hype... The things you say, the promises you make in order to raise sponsorship – or to justify that sponsorship having raised it”.¹¹⁰ However, by evoking the link between the Royal Coronation in 1953 and the sport, this tactic could have repositioned the motivation of the climb as being for the benefit of the country – a narrative that sometimes remained in the eyes of the press, if not amongst the climbers and their corporate backers.

A sales letter was put together to be mailed out to a list of potential sponsors. Headed “K2 – Nearly Highest, Easily Hardest”, the pitch made reference to a TV film in conjunction with Trans World International (eventually with Chameleon), and explained “sponsors will be rewarded with invaluable media exposure”. It went on to state that “since no British team has yet climbed K2 by any route a good film will have little difficulty in attracting public attention”.¹¹¹ They also cited earlier K2 expeditions having featured in news programming on television, radio and print.¹¹² Despite some

¹⁰⁶ Jim Curran, *K2: Triumph and Tragedy*, (London: Grafton Books, 1989), 26-7.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Rose, ‘Sponsors Leave British Climbers’.

¹⁰⁹ Greg Child, *Thin Air: Encounters in the Himalayas*, (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 2004), 151.

¹¹⁰ John Barry, *K2: Savage Mountain, Savage Summer*, (Somerset: The Oxford Illustrated Press Ltd, 1987), 143.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23

¹¹² Burgess and Burgess, *Burgess Book of Lies*, 324; Barry, *K2: Savage Mountain*, 24.

targeted efforts – for example writing to British Airways who responded that “Our experience of the sponsorship of expedition has tended to show that there are limited promotional returns to be gained from such involvements and consequently we have had to decline such offers of sponsorship” – it was Fullers Brewery who ultimately responded to the letter, and with seeming swiftness their role as primary sponsor was confirmed.¹¹³

The fact that they needed to sell the K2 effort in such a way – particularly the tag lines used – was quite telling and another sign that funds for climbers were limited, meaning superlatives and hype were required. Contrasting this with Bonington’s experiences perhaps demonstrates how far ahead he was in using alternative and unique angles to raise interest. The brewery put up some £30,000, funding the majority of the expedition, while Texaco provided £1,000, alongside modest MEF and BMC grants.¹¹⁴

To maximise their returns, the brewery employed Smees Advertising Agency – whom Fullers reportedly paid more than the £30,000 expedition sponsorship – reflecting the high stakes for the brewery and the specialist skills required to use the expedition for commercial purposes.¹¹⁵ The agency’s efforts led to an initial press conference followed by the use of a “London Pride” double-decker bus to further maximise publicity for the expedition.¹¹⁶ The climb was named “The Fullers’ K2 Expedition”, and the need to reinforce this in media dealings was explained to the team by Rouse, as well as the careful requirement to “Try not to refer to any other sponsors as ‘sponsors’, call them equipment suppliers or any euphemism suitable”.¹¹⁷ Fullers’ backing was part of an extended set of sponsorship arrangements for breweries and similar organisations, which had tended to target cricket,

¹¹³ Barry, *K2: Savage Mountain*, 21.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹¹⁶ Burgess and Burgess, *Burgess Book of Lies*, 327.

¹¹⁷ Barry, *K2: Savage Mountain*, 34.

football, rugby and golf.¹¹⁸ Whilst less conventional, Fullers' decision to back an expedition was not too dissimilar from the typical model applied to those more popular sports whereby, according to Collins and Vamplew, "a competition is paid by a sponsor to adopt a brand name".¹¹⁹

On the mountain things did not go as planned. Although the expedition had set out to climb the north-west ridge, the team dwindled in number as difficulties struck with Adrian and Alan Burgess leaving the mountain along with John Barry and others. Rouse changed tactics opting for the better known Abruzzi Spur route, and Jim Curran remained to take any film material. Despite these setbacks, Rouse climbed K2, summiting on August 4th along with several others. Shortly afterwards a storm struck that lasted several days stranding climbers in high camps and leading to the deaths of many, including Rouse himself.¹²⁰ It had been a tragic year on the mountain, with 27 summits and 13 deaths.¹²¹

One can only speculate about the reason for Rouse's determination to succeed by continuing to attempt to summit after the other members had departed. It may have related to the need to salvage something from the expedition to repay the sponsors, or to improve his standing by being the first Briton to stand on the summit. Indeed, there were hints at professional competition influencing Rouse. Aid Burgess recounts a second-hand conversation between Rouse and fellow expedition member John Porter. Porter asked Rouse about the implications should one of the Burgess' twins climb the mountain before Rouse, becoming the first Britons to do so and "His reply was interesting: 'Oh, it wouldn't matter that much. They live in the States now, anyway'".¹²²

¹¹⁸ See section entitled 'Brewers Society Survey 1981' in The Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR), *Committee of Enquiry into Sports Sponsorship: The Howell Report*, (London: CCPR, 1983), 12.

¹¹⁹ Tony Collins and Wray Vamplew, *Mud, Sweat and Beers: A Cultural History of Sport and Alcohol*, (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 57.

¹²⁰ Kurt Diemberger's account as recalled by Jim Curran in Curran, *K2: Triumph and Tragedy*, 157-161.

¹²¹ Steve Swenson, 'K2: The Mountaineer's Mountain Part II (1974-2012)', *Alpinist* 38 (2012), 49.

¹²² Burgess and Burgess, *Burgess Book of Lies*, 344.

There were also possible conflicts between Julie Tullis, another Briton attempting the peak in 1986, and Rouse as they both stood a chance of being the first successful British summiteer.¹²³ As a Briton and a woman Tullis, who had not started Himalayan climbing until in her forties,¹²⁴ likely had a greater marketing opportunity from a ‘first ascent’ of K2 and she already had lecture and book commitments in place.¹²⁵ She was an experienced mountaineer having climbed in the greater ranges and published her own autobiography.¹²⁶ However, Salkeld recognises that her climbing, reputation and achievements “received little recognition in a climbing establishment that was all too ready to mark her down as a star-struck appendage of Kurt Diemberger” with whom she produced several mountain films.¹²⁷

According to those who knew him well, Rouse was making compromises by being involved in – indeed leading – expeditions such as this. He was very much an amateur at heart, a romantic and believer in lightweight climbing ethics, yet here he was leading a large sponsored, high profile expedition. However, as Adrian Burgess noted:

I knew full well that Rouse didn’t want to take a rigid leadership role, but the prestige meant something to him... A large expedition with a large budget and greater hassles: all were, in many ways, the antithesis of what Rouse believed in. But, he had seen it work for Bonington, and he knew it could do the same for him.¹²⁸

¹²³ Ibid., 349.

¹²⁴ David Rose, ‘Reaching the Tragic Heights of Obsession’, originally published in *The Guardian* August 19, 1986, reprinted in Nelsson, *On the Roof of the World*, 3416.

¹²⁵ Jim Curran, ‘K2 Abruzzi Ridge’, in Birtles, *Alan Rouse: A Mountaineer’s Life*, 213.

¹²⁶ Julie Tullis, *Clouds from Both Sides*, (London: Grafton, 1987).

¹²⁷ Audrey Salkeld, ‘Tullis, Julia Elissa May (1939–1986)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/62486> (accessed 18 April, 2014).

¹²⁸ Burgess and Burgess, *Burgess Book of Lies*, 328.

This was the crucial point as this expedition was a vital one for Rouse to reach the upper echelons of mountaineering professionals. Burgess again:

I had the feeling that the expedition's success meant a lot to his career as a climber. In Britain there is room for only a few truly 'professional' mountaineers. Bonington and Scott were the most prominent. The rest, like Rouse, were left to scrabble their way up the pile.¹²⁹

This point was echoed by Jim Curran who explained how Rouse's priorities were conflicting, going on to note how:

It became imperative that expeditions like K2 should exist and, almost as important be seen to exist, so that somehow he could still use his name and reputation to carry him through the next season of trade fairs, lectures, magazine articles and one off commissions as guide, safety officer for films or whatever.¹³⁰

For Rouse therefore, it was a case of mixed aims and preferences and changing values that placed him in a position where climbing on K2, and ideally summiting, was a critical part of his career plans. It may have been such high expectations that caused him to push so far and into such danger on the mountain. Regardless of the motivation for pushing himself on K2 in the face of exhaustion and terrible conditions, Rouse, it seemed, died pursuing high-profile opportunities which led him to being placed in a most dangerous situation.

Making such compromises also impacted on how climbers were perceived by the climbing community, as explored in the previous chapter. This often meant that the challenges regarded by the climbing community as being the greatest ones were not often pursued for they were more difficult to 'sell'. Other climbers who had less personal financial pressures resting on the sport tended to make progress

¹²⁹ Ibid., 328.

¹³⁰ Curran, *K2: Triumph and Tragedy*, 22; also cited and discussed in Simon Thompson, *Unjustifiable Risk?: A Social History of British Climbing*, (Milnthorpe: Cicerone, 2010), 317.

on these. Scott and Rouse both set their more ethical stances to one side when opportunity arose to benefit from, or undertake particular expeditions where financing was critical. Rouse, for instance, was wary of commercial sponsors and felt exploitation was likely on either side of an arrangement, but suppressed these feelings to take up the funds offered by Fullers.¹³¹ This willingness to change is an important aspect of the pursuit of earning opportunity. Whilst genuinely amateur climbers may have been less willing to turn a blind eye to such changes, this was a necessary evil in the efforts to reach the top of the climbing world, suggesting that the elite professional desires were actually very strong and tended more towards earning a living. The setting aside of their values in such a manner was a significant statement to their peers and demonstrated the incompatibility of a climbing career and traditional ethics and values.

Other principles were also changing, but sometimes these made the sport more judgmental. Donnelly has noted that verification of climbing achievements, particularly if solo or in a pair, is based on trust which is a tradition that “derives from the days of gentleman explorers... of the 19th Century” where it was “not seemely (sic) for gentlemen to question each other’s integrity”.¹³² Since the sport is without rules or live spectators, individuals’ claims are invariably accepted. However, we will see shortly in the case of Jonathan Pratt, this era saw claims by one potential professional being questioned by others because of his surprising entrance to the mountaineering scene and his unconventional style. For Rouse though, this was not the case, thanks to his strong reputation, ambitious climbing, and successful attempt to bridge the ethics divide. Some of these features would also be true for Alison Hargreaves who, once established as an elite mountaineer, quickly became a focal point for much of the community.

¹³¹ Barry, *K2: Savage Mountain*, 31.

¹³² Peter Donnelly, ‘On Verification: A Comparison of Climbers and Birders’, in Alan Ingham and Eric Broom, eds., *Career Patterns and Career Contingencies in Sport: Proceedings of 1st Regional Symposium, International Committee for the Sociology of Sport*, (Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 1981), 490-1.

Alison Hargreaves

Alison Hargreaves was one of the newer number of elite climbers keen to use her mountain pursuits to earn a living from the sport in the 1990s. Despite a slow start to her career when, although she was not finding sponsorship or book contracts, she was living, “in essence, the life of a mountaineer”, Hargreaves secured substantial success in the few years before her 1995 death on K2.¹³³ Unlike Bonington, who relied mainly on raising sponsorship for each expedition and his own sales of services in lectures and books, and unlike Scott, who sought to minimise his commercial reliance, Hargreaves’s found earning potential by being personally sponsored by outdoor equipment manufacturers alongside other literature-related communications methods.

Like most elite mountaineers, Hargreaves was driven and committed. She did not let several setbacks prevent her from achieving her goals of being both a successful earning mountaineer, and succeeding in some of the biggest mountaineering challenges of the era. In addition, she also desired the celebrity status afforded only a minority of individuals in her area. For instance, Ron Fawcett recalled how, upon working with her before she became well-known, she “seemed a lovely person, but [was] desperate to be famous”.¹³⁴ During the 1980s she sought to raise funds for her intended climbs by contacting potential sponsors. Although her first commercial success would be the offer of equipment from Karrimor in 1983 in exchange for magazine photographs, it was in the early 1990s that she found a more fruitful commercial sponsor, in the form of clothing company Sprayway, with whom she formed an allegiance.¹³⁵ Sprayway were expanding from their core market into general outdoors clothing and saw Hargreaves as a way to promote products in this new area, as had other manufacturers who had endorsed climbers since the 1960s.¹³⁶ Thanks to a commercial arrangement where Hargreaves was

¹³³ David Rose and Ed Douglas, *Regions of the Heart*, (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 166.

¹³⁴ Ron Fawcett, *Rock Athlete*, (Sheffield: Vertebrate Publishing, 2010), Kindle edition, location 3094.

¹³⁵ Rose and Douglas, *Regions of the Heart*, 65.

¹³⁶ Mike Parsons and Mary Rose, *Invisible on Everest: Innovation and the Gear Makers*, (Philadelphia: Northern Liberties Press, 2003), 224.

given a £600 retainer per month for three years, this was a substantial step forward.¹³⁷ Thus, by the early 1990s, she explained that “Climbing is my career. That’s what I do everyday”.¹³⁸

Prior to this though, Hargreaves found recognition and professional opportunity hard to come by. As Rose and Douglas have noted:

Climbers less able than her were better known, more widely respected, because they drank with the 'right' people in the 'right' pubs, the nodal points of the mountaineering grapevine where a few influential opinion-formers, some of them connected to the two main climbing magazines, decided who was worth taking seriously.¹³⁹

This resulted in many of Hargreaves’ earlier achievements being overlooked by the climbing community, something which Rose and Douglas argued pushed her further, and thus may have contributed to the more substantial steps she went on to take.

Like some other elite climbers, Hargreaves worked with an agent to put promotional materials together and seek corporate sponsorship. This proved successful, resulting in a book deal with Hodder & Stoughton which included a £3,000 advance prior to a series of Alpine ascents.¹⁴⁰ It was her 1993/4 winter season in the Alps, during which she successfully climbed six Alpine faces, that raised her profile enormously. A 1994 issue of *High* magazine (which witnessed Hargreaves not only on the front cover, but also in a feature article on her ascent of the final of the six faces, and a significant part of the news and information section dedicated to the recent Croz Spur climb) highlighted how important this was in influencing her profile. For Hargreaves, it took this exceptional achievement to place her where she

¹³⁷ Rose and Douglas, *Regions of the Heart*, 171.

¹³⁸ Frohlick’s evidence is a recording of a panel discussion at Banff. Susan Frohlick, “‘Wanting the Children and Wanting K2’: The Incommensurability of Motherhood and Mountaineering in Britain and North America in the Late Twentieth Century’, *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13, no. 5 (2006), 483.

¹³⁹ Rose and Douglas, *Regions of the Heart*, 115-6.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 171, 210.

felt she belonged in the climbing community, and would lead on to improved opportunities. As a sign of her growing appeal, during this solo climb she was photographed by helicopter, an expensive but effective way to capture dramatic shots and something that was “becoming normal for top continental Alpinists”.¹⁴¹ In her own report of the climb on the Croz Spur, and undoubtedly reflecting the acceptance of sponsorship, the report finished by naming Hargreaves’ eleven sponsors.¹⁴²

This climb on the Croz Spur, a prominent route on the French North face of the Grandes Jorasses, improved Hargreaves’ standing. However, her successes in the Alps would not reach public appeal or media acclaim to anything close to Rebecca Stephens’ ascent of Everest in 1994, which made her a better-known mountaineering personality. Stephens, discussed later, followed the south col standard route to climb the mountain, despite having a limited mountaineering background. For Hargreaves, this was a major blow. She realised that being the first British woman to summit Everest would provide ample opportunity in the years to come, and missing out to a non-elite climber was a bitter moment.¹⁴³ Whilst being the second British woman to climb the mountain would gain relatively little appreciation, Hargreaves still set about climbing Everest, but rather than take a standard route she knew that an approach was required that would set her apart. Thus, she chose to climb the mountain by a difficult route, solo and, notably, without supplementary oxygen, even if she was aware that the public might not appreciate that Stephen’s ascent had been oxygen supported.¹⁴⁴

Hargreaves managed this successfully in May 1995, and earning opportunity did follow, helping to confirm her place as a fully-fledged elite and professional mountaineer. Whilst she would be criticised for climbing whilst a mother of two young children, Frohlick has explained how Hargreaves turned motherhood – which was also a unique selling point – to her advantage in the pursuit of publicity,

¹⁴¹ ‘Mountain Info’, *High* 134 (1994), 13.

¹⁴² Alison Hargreaves, ‘Croz Solo’, *High* 134 (1994), 47.

¹⁴³ Rose and Douglas, *Regions of the Heart*, 175.

¹⁴⁴ Brooker, ‘Public Lives’.

through moments such as her statement on the summit of Everest to her children (“To Tom & Kate, I am on the highest point in the world and I love you dearly”¹⁴⁵). As the *Independent* reported:

At least, says her husband, success on Everest has brought one significant change. Media bids of up to six figures have been flooding in and David Frost wants her on his show. Pakistan Airlines is offering free flights for her next trips and other potential sponsors are vying for her attention.¹⁴⁶

Hargreaves sought to solidify her position as one of Britain’s top mountaineers by tackling K2 just months after her Everest success and planning to follow this with an ascent of Kanchenjunga. This trio, she hoped, would be a major publicity draw and was “in order to further boost her media profile and sponsorship”.¹⁴⁷ It was evidence though of Krakauer’s observation of such climbers, remarking “a [sponsored] climber has to keep upping the ante. The next climb has to be harder and more spectacular than the last. It becomes an ever-tightening spiral”.¹⁴⁸

So it was that she attempted K2 in mid-1995, followed by widespread media interest given the close proximity to her Everest success. In the early 1970s there were suggestions that Bonington deliberately chose not to climb with Don Whillans because he had concerns about how it would affect his own professional opportunities. Similar remarks were made about Hargreaves and this fateful K2 climb. Although not intending to climb with Alan Hinkes who was on the mountain at the same time, she ended up in the same group as him, but opted not to climb with him on the mountain, nor to make

¹⁴⁵ Frohlick, ‘Wanting the Children and Wanting K2’, 481, 488.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Gillman, ‘Everest, and Now the Highlife Calls for Alison’, *The Independent*, May 20, 1995, online <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/everest-and-now-the-highlife-calls-for-alison-1620462.html> (accessed September 9, 2017).

¹⁴⁷ Frohlick, ‘Wanting the Children and Wanting K2’, 481.

¹⁴⁸ Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mount Everest Disaster*, (London: Pan, 1998), 33.

a summit attempt at the same time that Hinkes successfully did. On Hargreaves' decision not to climb with him, Hinkes later reflected that:

She must have believed that by climbing with the others, she would maximise her chance of success. At the same time... she may have feared that if she reached the summit with a fellow Briton, this would diminish the impact of her climb with the media.¹⁴⁹

When Hargreaves did make a summit attempt it was at the end of a difficult expedition which saw her team up with different people on the mountain and become increasingly desperate towards the end of the weather window. Tragically, she died on the mountain in mid-August 1995 in a storm on her way down after reaching the summit. As with Rouse in 1986, the need to attract publicity meant not only novelty, but daring and elevated risk as Hargreaves sought one last effort to summit K2 despite the lateness of the season. The burden of sponsorship and publicity was added to other pressures to complete the climb, and the situation resonated with Maher and Potter's observation that "Lack of time during an expedition can create excessive pressure to push on and put oneself in dangerous situations".¹⁵⁰ This was perhaps evidence of Lincoln Allison's wider sporting claim that "Professionalism is about careers. Thus professionals, when they have important decisions to make have too much at stake to make them well".¹⁵¹

A 1995 quote from Hargreaves used in the introduction to this chapter is worth repeating here. In it, Hargreaves remarked that "A lot of climbers think climbing owed them a living, but unless they can appeal to the general public, there really isn't any money in it", and it was this appeal that had become

¹⁴⁹ Rose and Douglas, *Regions of the Heart*, 245.

¹⁵⁰ Patrick T. Maher and Tom G. Potter, 'A Life to Risk: Cultural Differences in Motivations to Climb Among Elite Male Mountaineers', Kyle, Gerard, comp., ed. 2001. Proceedings of the 2000 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium. Gen. Tech. Rep. NE-276. Newtown Square, PA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northeastern Research Station, 157.

¹⁵¹ Allison, *Amateurism in Sport*, 154.

increasingly difficult for elite climbers to obtain.¹⁵² Hargreaves became a well-known elite mountaineer thanks to her climbing achievements. Gilchrist has explained how Hargreaves' image also affected the way she was regarded by the public – her unlikely climbing appearance, domestic pleasures and the fact that she was a mother all contributed to how she was viewed both before, and more so after, her death.¹⁵³

Alan Hinkes

Alan Hinkes found opportunities as a career climber by pursuing his goal to be the first Briton to climb the 14 peaks over 8,000m. This was a major commitment, and a long run accomplishment, taking some eighteen years to complete. Although he had been involved in other notable mountaineering expeditions of genuine difficulty, it was the pursuit of this record that gave him some commercial and earning opportunities, although this proved to be mixed.

The fourteen peaks were a challenge understandable enough and with a substantial enough profile to gain public interest and appeal. It was also easier to obtain backing and publicity in this pursuit of the world's highest peaks, where general interest would lay in the summiting rather than the approaches and routes taken, and Hinkes was trying to tap into this interest. However, being amongst the first to summit the peaks was seen as a novelty by some of the world's elite climbers. In 1986, the Pole Voytek Kurtyka said of this approach to mountaineering that "I have noticed, particularly in Western Europe, a tendency to 'collect' the highest mountains. Why this fascination for just the 8000s and put aside magnificent mountains that lack a few metres? It vulgarises Himalayan climbing qualities".¹⁵⁴ This was a similar charge to those that threatened the growing guided climbing world. Kurtyka qualified his statement by saying "it is easier to sell the number 8000. It is becoming very difficult to only sell

¹⁵² Brooker, 'Public Lives'.

¹⁵³ Paul Gilchrist, "'Motherhood, Ambition and Risk': Mediating the Sporting Hero/ine in Conservative Britain', *Media, Culture & Society* 29, no. 3 (2007), 402.

¹⁵⁴ 'Messner Summit', *Mountain* 109 (1986), 38.

adventure” going on to explain that “this tendency to collect the 8000s has been forged by the media, because if I had reached six, seven, eight or nine 8000s then people would relate to that”.¹⁵⁵ Despite these perspectives, Hinkes followed this route as a way to pursue a climbing career.

After ascending the first of the peaks and making clearer his intentions and abilities, Hinkes was able to attract some corporate backing. Thompson recalls how Hinkes was initially sponsored by Bull Computers of France “as part of their ‘Esprit d’Equipe – Challenge 8000’ advertising campaign”,¹⁵⁶ which involved promotional work for the company including press conferences.¹⁵⁷ Unfortunately for Hinkes, the sponsorship ceased when Bull Computers ran into financial problems “and French workers protested at the extravagance of the sponsorship programme”, not the first controversy he would encounter.¹⁵⁸ Although this main sponsorship ended, Hinkes became associated with British manufacturer Berghaus in the early 1980s, using their equipment on expeditions,¹⁵⁹ whilst he raised other sponsorship when opportunities arose, and even tagged “along with other expeditions that had already booked the peaks” to reduce costs.¹⁶⁰ His efforts could not be classed as lavish or highly funded.

Later reporting about Hinkes, as well as Doug Scott, would suggest that the earnings from lecturing were substantial.¹⁶¹ However, neither this nor sponsorship provided his main source of income. Nor did writing, for despite his successes he failed to capitalise on the professional climber mainstay of an

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵⁶ Thompson, *Unjustifiable Risk*, 321-2.

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Venables, ‘Mountaineering Notes’, *High* 82 (1989), 17.

¹⁵⁸ Thompson, *Unjustifiable Risk*, 321-2.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Alan taking Berghaus to Yet Another Peak’, *The Journal*, April 9, 2003.

¹⁶⁰ Thompson, *Unjustifiable Risk*, 321-2.

¹⁶¹ Puchan, ‘Living Extreme’, 174; Doug Scott, ‘Bhutan - A Summary of Climbing and the Anglo-Indian Ascent of Jitchu Drake’, *Alpine Journal* 94 (1989-1990), 43, where Scott refers to “having completed a series of 70-odd lectures in an attempt to catch up on paying for my mountaineering pleasures over the years”.

expedition book. It was only in 2013 that he did so.¹⁶² When dealing with a controversy over the sale of pictures of Alison Hargreaves after their time on K2, Hinkes acknowledged that “photography is my livelihood”.¹⁶³ Interestingly this reflects on the difficulties he faced using more traditional sponsorship after the end of the Bull Computers backing, and other more literary options, suggesting he was unable to attract the necessary backing to build entire expeditions around his efforts. With unusual sponsors like Bull Computers, Qatar Airways and Famous Grouse,¹⁶⁴ it perhaps is clear that he did not hold the same public appeal as other climbers, and his ascents were further subsidised by earnings as a lecturer and “selling videos of his achievements to ITV”.¹⁶⁵

This was part of the changing attitudes towards elite mountaineers. Despite the tag-line of the 8,000m peaks, Hinkes failed to attract a major public profile which hampered his desires to make a living. By the time he summited the sixth peak, Everest, his success on the mountain was largely ignored in the British media at the expense of a non-elite climber – Brian Blessed.¹⁶⁶ His different public image was damaged further when records of his failures were widely reported. His accidents gained as much coverage, if not more, than his successes, including an occasion where he injured his back sneezing on chapati flour,¹⁶⁷ leading to him being described as “calamity-prone” and “Britain’s unluckiest climber”.¹⁶⁸ The imagery and perception that came with such reporting did not help him to build up the image of a heroic mountaineer, and may have given potential sponsors pause for thought. Even where Hinkes’ efforts did gain attention, it was sometimes pushed out of the limelight. As *The Herald* reported in a Hinkes’ piece:

¹⁶² Alan Hinkes, *8000m: Climbing the World’s Highest Mountains: All 14 Summits*, (Milnthorpe: Cicerone Press, 2013).

¹⁶³ ‘K2 Pal’s Cash for Pics Bid’, *Daily Mirror*, August 18, 1995.

¹⁶⁴ Jamie Doward, ‘The Observer Profile: Alan Hinkes’, *The Guardian*, June 5, 2005.

¹⁶⁵ Tom Prentice, ‘An Expedition Not to Sneeze at’, *The Herald*, May 23, 1998.

¹⁶⁶ Peter Beaumont, ‘Thirst to be First’, *The Observer*, December 15, 1996.

¹⁶⁷ Paul Wilkinson, ‘Humble Chapati Foils Ascent of Man’, *The Times*, July 31, 1997.

¹⁶⁸ Luke Edwards, ‘Hinkes Stoops and is Conquered... By a Shoe’, *The Journal*, October 7, 2000.

It is so easy to forget the hundreds of climbers... who are heading off to the Himalaya this summer with their eye on smaller, but no less challenging peaks and faces. It is with them that the true future of mountaineering lies, not with keeping scores.¹⁶⁹

Despite setbacks, Hinkes showed determination in completing the challenge. Potter and Maher's sociological study showed how, for some, persistence was a "common theme when overcoming barriers to their mountaineering careers".¹⁷⁰ It was only where there was a sense of competition that the media became keenly interested in Hinkes' story. In a typical display of sensationalism, some of the national British media implied a race was going on to be the first Briton to summit all of the 8,000m peaks. The aforementioned article in *The Herald*, whilst Hinkes was part way through his summits, raised the "contender in the wings" of Jonathan Pratt, who was apparently attempting the same feat.¹⁷¹

Jonathan Pratt

The story of Jonathan Pratt provides an interesting insight into how mountaineers were regarded by the climbing community, and demonstrates just how much the sport had changed over the last few decades. With Pratt's unconventional approach, his experience also hints at the tensions that still existed in the climbing world between individuals who did and did not belong. It was the journalist Peter Gillman who helped to bring this story into the public arena and who pointed out, like others before, that in mountaineering "one's word is taken as one's bond".¹⁷² However, in recent decades successful summit claims have been questioned, a sign of a move away from the amateur ideals that

¹⁶⁹ Prentice, 'An Expedition Not to Sneeze at'.

¹⁷⁰ Maher and Potter, 'A Life to Risk', 157-8.

¹⁷¹ Prentice, 'An Expedition Not to Sneeze at'.

¹⁷² Peter Gillman, 'The Odd Man and the Mountains', *The Independent*, June 5, 1994, online <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/the-odd-man-and-the-mountain-is-jonathan-pratt-britains-most-successful-mountaineer-a-storm-is-raging-among-the-climbing-elite-about-this-outsiders-claim-to-have-conquered-the-worlds-two-highest-peaks-1420492.html> (accessed August 6, 2016).

were so tightly woven into the sport, and a change that revealed more about the competitive and professional aspects of British mountaineering.

This was shown in particular in the case of Pratt who burst on to the scene in the early 1990s with several major climbs, but was seen as a maverick due to being virtually unknown to the climbing world, let alone known to be climbing at an elite standard. That he was understood to have climbed without permits and to have a somewhat unusual approach made him stand out from the norm, even being regarded as “outside the mould of British mountaineers”,¹⁷³ although in avoiding permit fees he may not have been alone.¹⁷⁴

He attempted Everest in 1991, with a cavalier approach seen to be typical of his style. Everest had not started out as his objective, but upon hearing of a spare permit he thought it was “too good an opportunity to miss” and found himself on the mountain albeit as a solo climber and without supplementary oxygen.¹⁷⁵ Although unsuccessful that year, he climbed the mountain the following year, again taking a fairly haphazard approach to organisation and climbing. In 1993 he climbed K2, being the first Briton to do so and return safely, in an expedition and ascent that became shrouded in controversy due to funding issues, the lateness of the season when he reached the summit, and the absence of a photograph or other evidence that he did so.

Having climbed Everest in 1992, Pratt seemed as though he would rival Hinkes in ascending the fourteen highest peaks in the world, particularly after climbing Gasherbrum I in 1994 and Makalu in 1995.¹⁷⁶ However, despite his achievements prior to 1993 he was unable to secure sponsorship or

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Alan Burgess recalls steps being taken to minimise permit costs when climbing Cho Oyu, on the border of Nepal and Tibet. Burgess and Burgess, *Burgess Book of Lies*, 317.

¹⁷⁵ Jonathan Pratt, ‘Everest Solo’, *Himalayan Journal* 49 (1993), online <https://www.himalayanclub.org/hj/49/7/everest-solo/> (accessed August 8, 2016).

¹⁷⁶ Jonathan Pratt, ‘Hidden Peak 1994 & Makalu 1995’, *Alpine Journal* 101 (1996), 61-67.

even grant funding for his K2 climb which was to attempt the difficult west ridge. Pratt partially explained this by saying that

None of the climbers in our team was well known and, since our famous predecessors had failed so low on the route, no one gave us much of a chance; in fact both the Mount Everest Foundation and the British Mountaineering Council refused to endorse our expedition.¹⁷⁷

Pratt did concede though that his grant application was “a mess”, and he did not attend the meeting in person, but even so, some influential commentators expressed their surprise that such a potentially cutting-edge British expedition was denied funding from the MEF.¹⁷⁸ In particular Stephen Venables found that there were genuine concerns leading to this rejection but also there was “a strong element of prejudice against a group of climbers who were not ‘names’ and who were perceived to be unsuitable for an attempt on the West Ridge of K2”.¹⁷⁹ For the MEF grant provision reviewing panel though “it was this dearth of information and the supplied list of team members including some who had *not* been to 7,000 meters, rather than any ‘prejudice against a group of climbers who were not names’ that forced the recommendation be ‘Not Approved’”.¹⁸⁰

Regardless of their truth, Venables’ claims brought into the open the possibility that outdated perspectives more common in the Alpine Club of the nineteenth-century were actually still influential in the 1990s. Indeed, this example suggested that it was down to one’s connections, who one knew, or their standing in the climbing community that determined their success at getting some financial backing from the establishment, with merit less of a factor. This certainly ran contrary to the increasingly meritocratic post-war direction of mountaineering. After finding sufficient funding for the climb, and proving his doubters wrong by succeeding and becoming the first Briton to summit K2 and

¹⁷⁷ Jonathan Pratt, ‘Against the Odds’, *Alpine Journal* 100 (1995), 39.

¹⁷⁸ Gillman, ‘Odd Man and the Mountains’.

¹⁷⁹ Stephen Venables, ‘Jonathan Pratt – Success on Everest and K2’, *High* 136 (1994), 32.

¹⁸⁰ Bill Ruthven and Bob Pettigrew letter to *High* magazine, *High* 137 (1994), 74.

safely return alongside American Dan Mazur, questions were still raised about Pratt. Some queried the claimed ascent, including Hinkes. Journalist Peter Gillman quoted Hinkes explaining that:

'Hanging on to the end till everybody had gone, and then saying you'd got up and not having any photographs and saying you'd battled through bad weather into the night.' It was all, Hinkes said, 'rather far-fetched', adding: 'That's just a personal opinion - but it's also the opinion of most of the other people who were there last year'.¹⁸¹

Responding to those who questioned whether they reached the top of K2, Pratt's climbing companion explained "Obviously it is difficult to prove that we got to the summit. Mostly you do this by giving accounts of the route to those who have already been there. We took some photographs but it was night when we got to the top".¹⁸² Thus, the summit photograph so integral to modern mountaineering and that Brown notes became much more important and "iconic" as romanticism and the sublime became less influential, was absent.¹⁸³

In the years following his ascents of Everest and K2, Pratt's credibility continued to be called into question. As an outsider to the elite mountaineering community he was little known so, when he succeeded in reaching summits, validation of his climbs continued to cause some difficulty. The fact that many of his climbs were undertaken at "minimal cost, [and] without publicity" perversely served to raise more queries about his credibility.¹⁸⁴ This was not helped by his "amateurish" lecture at the Alpine Club which did not compare favourably with the "fluent, hi-tech approach of professional

¹⁸¹ Gillman, 'Odd Man and the Mountains'.

¹⁸² Will Bennett, 'Mountaineer's Spectacular Achievement goes Unnoticed', *The Independent*, October 4, 1993, online <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/mountaineers-spectacular-achievement-goes-unnoticed-last-month-jonathan-pratt-became-the-first-briton-to-climb-k2-and-survive-but-no-one-paid-any-attention-writes-will-bennett-1508567.html> (accessed August 6, 2016).

¹⁸³ Douglas A. Brown, 'The Modern Romance of Mountaineering: Photography, Aesthetics and Embodiment' *International Journal of the History of Sport* 24 (2007), 27.

¹⁸⁴ Gillman, 'Odd Man and the Mountains'.

mountaineers".¹⁸⁵ Thus, a perverse situation had arisen where his disorganised and unprofessional approach led to high levels of criticism despite his elite level climbing and achievements. Dean James, a member of the K2 climb who left early in the expedition citing the team make-up and safety concerns, wrote to *High* magazine in August 1994 taking the middle ground in this debate. As James explained:

There is a lot of vagueness concerning the expedition and Jonathan Pratt in particular, but it seems some of the climbing establishment is using this in a prejudiced manner against a climber whose lack of media hype leaves him open to one way criticism... I think the expedition is being naïve in suggesting that the climbing establishment was somehow biased against our trip. Our expedition was not expertly organized nor professionally advertised in any way and many people including myself, would, not surprisingly, think of our trip as a bit amateurish. On the other hand, after the outcome of the expedition, no matter what people's reservations were about our trip and Jonathan Pratt, they should put personal bias behind them and give Jonathan and Dan their due credit for a wonderful achievement.¹⁸⁶

Pratt's K2 expedition's failure to publicise their achievement only encouraged further criticism and distrust. Being such a major route and ascent by a Briton on K2's West Ridge, perhaps the authorities fully expected a major publicity push and the absence of this raised questions in their minds. However, Pratt was, according to Venables, "certainly no garrulous boaster; he plays his cards close to his chest", so to pursue commercial opportunity like others before may not have suited, or been comfortable to him.¹⁸⁷ Perversely though this episode suggests that commercially savvy approaches were increasingly *expected* by the climbing community for individuals who tried new and innovative climbs on the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Dean James, 'K2 Climb Congratulated' letter, *High* 141 (1994), 69.

¹⁸⁷ Stephen Venables, 'Jonathan Pratt – Success on Everest and K2', *High* 136 (1994), 32.

world's greatest peaks. By taking an approach to self-promotion that was more in keeping with pre-1953 climbs, Pratt was criticised.

Those already mentioned were not the only elite climbers who found earning opportunity in the period, but their experiences do represent the options available to elite climbers who sought a career in mountaineering other than guiding. Other notable successes for climbers who created commercial opportunities include Stephen Venables, whose expedition to Everest's Kangshung face in 1988 was part-sponsored by Rolex watches (with the brand mentioned many times in the expedition book), and who went on to become a prominent writer, as well as featuring on various television programmes and documentaries.¹⁸⁸ Meanwhile, Aid Burgess' Anglo/American attempt on K2 in 1994 was sponsored by Reebok under the title "1994 Reebok International K2 North Ridge Expedition" and seemed tied into a relationship between the twins and the manufacturer which included Adrian Burgess presenting at tradeshow event for Reebok.¹⁸⁹

The opportunities and pursuits of these elite mountaineers demonstrate how much the sport had changed since the formative years of its modernisation and early commodification. Whilst in the 1960s professionals focussed on the Alps, climbs in Europe garnered less interest after 1985 than those in the greater ranges. The novelty factor became increasingly important if they wanted to stay in the public-eye, with climbers needing to put a different slant on their expeditions to attract some of the volatile pot of sponsorship to fund their ventures. The need to combine or reduce expedition objectives to accommodate these novelties was an area of tension and compromise in order to facilitate commercial arrangements, as Venables has reflected:

One of the great conundrums of the explosion in television, the news media and the Internet is that, rather than informing people about new and different challenges, it has worked to

¹⁸⁸ Stephen Venables, *Everest: Kangshung Face*, (London: Pan, 1991).

¹⁸⁹ Burgess and Burgess, *Burgess Book of Lies*, 442, 447.

reduce the idea of what adventurers should be doing to things we have already heard of and know about.¹⁹⁰

The wider perception of mountaineering was simplifying due to the way it was being portrayed. Alongside this, appealing to corporate backers remained an option. If climbing experiences could be detailed in such a way that, according to Johnston and Edwards, “a few graphic sentences can make good advertising ‘copy’”, this could represent a credible opportunity.¹⁹¹

The diversity in commercial avenues pursued was important because as well as being attracted to different types of expedition, the nature of media coverage for mountaineering was also changing. Although historically some expeditions had sent regular dispatches to newspapers updating on the build up to a climb and early experiences on a mountain, more recently the mainstream interest has been on the moments of success or tragedy. In reality, these were the moments that resonated most with readers back at home, alongside the ‘glossier’ images of yetis and IT.¹⁹² Bonington’s increasingly refined entrepreneurial approach – unencumbered by the expectations of governing bodies – showed that new ideas and novel concepts such as these not only had real value in the pursuit of earning from mountaineering, but also demonstrated how the sport had become flexible and innovative enough to lead other sports in the way it was promoted.¹⁹³ However, because stories needed to be increasingly accessible, the intricacies of the sport became secondary and less well known. The background of the route to a mountain or the progress being made up its lower slopes were now of little relevance.

¹⁹⁰ Beaumont, ‘Thirst to be First’.

¹⁹¹ Barbara R. Johnston and Ted Edwards, ‘The Commodification of Mountaineering’, *Annals of Tourism Research* 21, no. 3 (1994), 466.

¹⁹² J. A. Walter, ‘Death as Recreation: Armchair Mountaineering’, *Leisure Studies* 3, no. 1 (2006), 67-76.

¹⁹³ The Sports Sponsorship Advisory Service report in 2000 did not make significant reference to use of websites in sponsorship, yet the earlier Sepu Kangri expeditions used this medium extensively. Sports Sponsorship Advisory Service, ‘Making Sponsorship a Success’, 1-7, 10-1 – 10-24.

Indeed, if even Bonington could not engage the wider public on genuine climbing abilities alone, there was little hope that any other climbers could avoid reaching for novelty.

The elite commercial climber career path was competitive, fraught with risk, and could potentially lead to one's name being tarnished. The small number of new entrants competed with the stalwarts, and their collective entrepreneurial efforts continued to expand interest and the market for mountaineering stories. Alongside this, a new market was expanding and some elite climbers moved into it, finding a way of maintaining a life in the mountains with making a living. By using their expertise to guide new client climbers they managed to expand the demand for their skills. This was the change which fundamentally broadened out the appeal of greater ranges mountaineering into entirely new groups. Not only was a new market created which enabled earnings to be pursued, but some of the client climbers became well known climbing personalities, encroaching into the territory previously occupied by more professionally-minded climbers. In doing so, this new activity increased demand for paid climbing guides in the greater ranges, the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

Guided climbing

During this post-1985 era, elite climbers found that they were not alone in being able to earn, temporarily or consistently, from mountaineering. Hughson, Inglis and Free have explained how "Popularisation leads to a breakdown in the conventions of sport", and it was apparent that mountain guides increasingly successfully appealed to emerging tourist adventurers, creating a new group of client climbers.¹⁹⁴ The 1980s through to the 2000s saw an explosion in non-elite client climbers, paying a fee to be led up (often) Himalayan peaks by guides from climbing companies and commercial expeditions. These developments meant that those who had a relatively low level of competence were

¹⁹⁴ John Hughson, David Inglis and Marcus Free, *The Uses of Sport: A Critical Study*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 58-9.

no longer limited to what they could read or hear about high altitude mountaineering. They could now, through payment, participate in this sport at an elite level.

This was a new form of commodification that involved guides and less-skilled tourist climbers ascending the world's highest peaks, combining tourism with adventure. For some this was part of wider tourism pilgrimage which, in other sports would mean spectating at Indianapolis or playing a round of golf at St. Andrews.¹⁹⁵ Although these were often experiences of non-sports people, they reflected the pursuit of a new type of experience at a time where greater disposable income could make such opportunities available. In mountaineering, this new experience was based on the desire to emulate the renowned climbers of earlier years by stepping into some of the most inhospitable outdoors environments in the world, pursuing an experience with very real risks and a sense of following the footsteps of past great climbers. Some of these non-elite clients found an opportunity to sell a service back to the interested public through their publicity or personality led efforts, pushing into the territory of the established and hopeful elite professional climbers – and this group is particularly relevant to this thesis rather than the whole of the clientele pool. For those who guided them this activity meant that they could earn a different type of living within these adventurous places.

This process began on April 30th 1985 when the 55-year old American millionaire Dick Bass summited Everest, the seventieth person to do so.¹⁹⁶ However, this was an ascent unlike those that had preceded it, for Bass had paid to be guided to the 8,848m summit by the established elite American climber, David Breashears. The practice of paying guides to take clients up mountains had its roots in the nineteenth-century 'Golden Age' of mountaineering where local guides would be employed by often well-to-do British climbers to lead and load-carry on first-ascents of alpine peaks. Guiding continued

¹⁹⁵ Williams, 'The Indianapolis 500', 247-262.

¹⁹⁶ Richard Salisbury, 'The Himalayan Database: The Expedition Archives of Elizabeth Hawley', American Alpine Club, (2004), reference EVER-851-02.

and was very common in the Alps and America, and even regarded as “successful” in these ranges, although it rarely aroused wide public interest.¹⁹⁷ By the 1960s, centres such as ISM – led by John Harlin, Dougal Haston and Pete Boardman at different times – led the way in the Alps where individuals could be guided by elite climbers including Haston, Mick Burke or Don Whillans.¹⁹⁸ However, guiding clients was an entirely new feature to bring to mountaineering’s greater ranges. The challenges in these areas were previously tackled by elite climbers who could afford the time, and accepted the risk and discomfort to pursue their goals. The accessibility, logistical challenges, requirement for specialist equipment and sheer scale and difficulty of the greater ranges meant that non-mountaineers had hitherto rarely ventured into them seeking to reach their highest points.

Bass was a wealthy oil geologist and by climbing Everest he had not only reached the top of the world, but had become the first person to complete the ‘Seven Summits’, one of mountaineering’s first broadly meaningless (in a sporting sense), but widely understood, novelties by summiting the highest peak on each continent.¹⁹⁹ As part of the list-ticking exercises that became increasingly popular, much like ‘Munro-bagging’ and (more recently) bucket-lists, the ‘Seven Summits’ have since become very popular including amongst non-elite climbers. Prior to climbing Everest, Bass was already pitching his expeditions as part of the ‘Seven Summits’.²⁰⁰ Afterwards, he publicised this effort and authored a book about his exploits (the front cover of the 1988 edition carrying a quote from none other than Clint Eastwood), demonstrating in the process that commercial opportunities from mountaineering were no longer the preserve of elite climbers.²⁰¹ Simultaneously, David Breashears, as Bass’ guide, had realised the prospect for guiding clients up such peaks when they might not otherwise be able. This

¹⁹⁷ Edmund Hillary, *The View from the Summit*, (London: BCA, 1999), 298.

¹⁹⁸ Jeff Connor, *Dougal Haston: The Philosophy of Risk*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd, 2002), 113. See also Jim Perrin, *The Villain: The Life of Don Whillans*, (London: Arrow, 2006), 249.

¹⁹⁹ The exact definition of the Seven Summits has become contentious, with different versions based on varying interpretations of continental geography.

²⁰⁰ See letter from Dick Bass to Chris Bonington, February 22, 1983, MHT, CBO/01/17/01 written on prominent ‘Seven Summits’ letterheaded paper.

²⁰¹ Dick Bass, Frank Wells and Rick Ridgeway, *Seven Summits*, (New York: Warner Books, 1988).

development therefore opened up new guiding 'careers' for elite mountaineers, led to a quick expansion of guiding companies, and generated a good degree of criticism. Therefore, in summiting Everest that day, Bass and Breashears initiated a change for non-elite mountaineers and professional elite guides that has influenced the pace and nature of transformation in the sport ever since.

Clients

Bass' experience quickly paved the way for other non-elite client climbers to attempt peaks in the greater ranges. Everest was often the main target for guided expeditions, thanks to its broader recognition and focal point in mountaineering history. For such clients, the mountaineering challenge in an aesthetic or achievement sense was not important. Instead, attention was on summiting and so the 'easiest' routes became most popular for guided climbs. This was a challenge to the established climbing ethics amongst the sport's elite as these popular routes were often not regarded with great enthusiasm or often attempted by elite climbers, being perceived as adding little value in terms of advancing the sport. Indeed, when asked in the 1990s about whether there will be "competition for peaks between professionals and amateurs", guide Jon Tinker explained that he did not foresee this becoming an issue for:

...the trips that we [as guides] do are generally the snow-plodding normal routes. But if you look at the second easiest route on any 8000m peak, it's actually bloody hard, which illustrates that there is only one route which is likely to be chocked up by commercial groups.²⁰²

After Bass had shown what was possible on Everest, the pool of potential non-elite clients quickly grew.²⁰³ This trend has been supported by the statistical analysis of Salisbury and Hawley who found that a few particularly prominent routes became especially popular to the extent that "in recent years [to 2007], expeditions attempting these four routes [two of which were on Everest] have exceeded

²⁰² Jon Tinker, 'Commercial Expeditions', *Alpine Journal* 102 (1997), 178.

²⁰³ Walt Unsworth, *Everest: The Mountaineering History*, (London: Bâton Wicks, 2000), 534.

the numbers to all of the other routes and peaks in the Nepal Himalaya”.²⁰⁴ This growing demand was not limited to the Himalayas with Johnston and Edwards identifying a similarly trend in North America.²⁰⁵ The growth in climber numbers was focussed on Ama Dablam, Cho Oyu (the former for its “majestic splendour overlooking the Khumbu Valley”, and the latter “being the ‘easiest’ of the 8000m peaks”²⁰⁶) and Everest, with Salisbury and Hawley’s analysis showing that the vast majority of climbers on these three peaks took the established ‘commercial’ routes.²⁰⁷

Numerous factors have been identified as the reasons for such a rise in demand. Explanations include rising social leisure time,²⁰⁸ the increasingly sophisticated facilities and equipment available in the Himalayas (such as satellite communications up on the mountain’s highest camps),²⁰⁹ through to sociological and psychological issues regarding attitudes towards, and rising demand for, risk as a motivation.²¹⁰ Tempting non-elite climbers into this world was further encouraged by glossy brochures of the newly established guiding companies, whose sales pitches often implied that the summit of Everest could be reached easily by anyone of adequate fitness.

Unlike elite climbers who played up the risk of their climbs to help sell them, the risk of guided climbs was played down. In an analysis of why Westerners climb, Rosen considered how such brochures made these ascents seem within the grasp of non-elite-mountaineers - “Should it surprise anyone that

²⁰⁴ Richard Salisbury, Elizabeth Hawley, *Himalaya By Numbers: A Statistical Analysis of Mountaineering in the Nepal Himalaya*, 2007, no publisher, 11-16, online <http://www.himalayandatabase.com/downloads/HimalayaByNbrs.pdf> (accessed January 17, 2018). The number of climbers has continued to grow since 2007. See Alan Arnette, 'Everest by the Numbers: 2018 Edition', *The Blog on alanarnette.com*, December 17, 2017, online <http://www.alanarnette.com/blog/2017/12/17/everest-by-the-numbers-2018-edition/> (accessed January 17, 2018).

²⁰⁵ Johnston and Edwards, ‘Commodification of Mountaineering’, 463.

²⁰⁶ Salisbury and Hawley, *Himalaya by Numbers*, 6.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 14, 16.

²⁰⁸ See the work of Gill Pomfret for more on motivations for mountaineer tourists. For example, Gill Pomfret, 'Package Mountaineer Tourists Holidaying in the French Alps: An Evaluation of Key Influences Encouraging their Participation', *Tourism Management* 32, no. 3 (2011), 501-510.

²⁰⁹ Stephen Slemon, 'Climbing Mount Everest: Postcolonialism in the Culture of Ascent', *Canadian Literature* 158 (1998), 23.

²¹⁰ Rosen, ‘Somalis Don’t Climb’.

climbers who are not world-class ones should think they would not only be able to summit Everest but also do so in comfort”.²¹¹ This implied that the economics of guiding required high chances of success and low levels of risk to attract potential clients. The result of this growing demand was that mountaineering, according to Palmer, was “increasingly attracting a breed known as ‘executive adventurers’, predominantly men with high-profile white collar professions, who spend their weekends and holidays mountaineering”.²¹²

Furthermore, a better understanding of the elite end of the sport and its participants also affected demand. As Beedie has remarked, “to spend time with mountaineers is to absorb patterns of behaviour relating to what to talk about, how to talk about it, how to dress and what mountaineering objectives one should aspire towards”.²¹³ Interested parties were getting to know their heroes from the 1960s and 1970s and into the 1980s much better thanks to festivals, literature and lectures. As the elite professionally-minded climbers sold themselves more and raised publicity, further non-elite demand was created as more people sought to emulate them. The effect of the elite climbers as inspiration for others was not lost on them. When it was put to Bonington in 1996 that he was partly responsible for the growing number of tourists [guided climbers and trekkers] and their side effects in Nepal he agreed. “‘I’m part of that process... but it’s not constructive to say this should never have happened”.²¹⁴

Costs were high for non-elite guided climbers, disproportionately so on the particularly popular routes.²¹⁵ Huey’s analysis showed that the cost to climb Everest by its most popular Nepalese South

²¹¹ Ibid., 158-159. See also Catherine Palmer, “‘Shit Happens’: The Selling of Risk in Extreme Sport”, *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 3 (2002), 326.

²¹² Palmer, ‘Shit Happens’, 330.

²¹³ Paul Beedie, ‘Mountain Guiding and Adventure Tourism: Reflections on the Choreography of the Experience’, *Leisure Studies* 22 (2003), 151.

²¹⁴ Ed Douglas, ‘The Shrinking World: Climb Every Mountain’, *The Observer*, August 4, 1996.

²¹⁵ Raymond B. Huey, ‘The Economics of Adventure: On the High Cost of Himalayan Climbing Permits’, *Alpine Journal* 106 (2001), 160-167.

Col route (most frequently used by commercial expeditions), was eight times more expensive than his statistical testing would expect it to be were there not a premium on it, whilst the cost to climb Cho Oyu was also higher than expected.²¹⁶ Aside from permits, travel expenses, provisions, insurance and a presumably healthy profit margin for commercial outfits who organised the expeditions, served to push costs often well into the tens of thousands per person. However, as Bass recognised, commercial opportunities which might offset such expenses were possible for the new breed of client climbers. Bass' *Seven Summits* book sold well, whilst fellow American, Sandy Pittman, climbing Everest in 1996 to complete her own seven summits had an arrangement with the *Today Show* on NBC,²¹⁷ and *Vogue* magazine.²¹⁸ It was explained that other climbers across the ten commercial expeditions on Everest in 1996 – a year infamous for the number of deaths amongst guides and clients including eight between 10th and 11th May – had “publishing contracts already in hand”.²¹⁹

Whilst the Himalayan climbers of the 1960s and 1970s were often there on merit – even if not the best technically they were still competent and experienced – by the 1980s affordability became a determining factor much like it had been a century before. The pioneering climbers of the Alps in the Golden Age and the late nineteenth-century were almost entirely upper-middle class given that cost and time were important considerations, and unavailable to many. The situation from the mid-1980s had many parallels. If the climb could be afforded and time allocated, one could buy one's way onto an expedition with a chance of summiting the world's greatest mountains. Such was the scale of this new successful commodification it was regarded in the mid to late 1990s as “the ‘In’ outdoor craze”.²²⁰ The growing opportunities available to non-elite climbers who could afford guides was part of a

²¹⁶ Ibid., 160-1.

²¹⁷ Slemon, 'Climbing Mount Everest', 23.

²¹⁸ Palmer, 'Shit Happens', 331.

²¹⁹ Slemon, 'Climbing Mount Everest', 23.

²²⁰ Alan Thomson, 'Himalayan Humbug', *The Herald*, August 30, 1997.

“remarkable change” which saw mountaineering transformed over recent years more than most other sports.²²¹

With the arrival of this group, elite mountaineers could no longer expect that sponsorship deals and publicity would come solely their way. The back-story for client climbers and the idea of ordinary people – rather than those who dedicated their lives to such adventures – doing extraordinary things played into this interest. This was particularly true for Rebecca Stephens. Prior to climbing Everest in 1993, Stephens was a journalist who had only started climbing some four years before.²²² In May of that year she became the first British woman to climb Everest, and this created an enormous amount of publicity and opportunity, seeing her release a book, undertake a lecture tour and become a motivational speaker. Her ascent was major national news including a front-page story in the *Daily Express* (Figure 6).²²³

Like much mountaineering journalism in the mainstream media before it, its coverage was tinged with sensationalism, over-the-top reporting and enthusiastic praise. In particular, the *Express* offered comparisons between Stephens’ climb and that of Harry Taylor who had experienced serious difficulties and was climbing without oxygen



Figure 6 - *Daily Express* front page, May 18, 1993

²²¹ Ewen Macaskill, 'Climb any Mountain', *The Scotsman*, January 11, 1993.

²²² Natasha Narayan, 'Mountain of Publicity for Everest Heroine', *The Guardian*, May 18, 1993.

²²³ Paul Fuller, 'Rebecca: I'm on Top of the World', *Daily Express*, May 18, 1993.

just days before, drawing an unfair comparison whilst seemingly seeking to elevate Stephens' appearance further.²²⁴

Just a day after her ascent, *The Guardian* highlighted the mainstream interest that Stephens' summit had generated, citing her publicity agency saying "We have already had three publishers ringing up asking to speak to her before she even finished her climb. She is going to be very, very much in demand".²²⁵ What was not widely reported though was that Stephens' achievement was not a significant mountaineering one and, as Potter more recently pointed out, was "broadly ignored" by the climbing community.²²⁶ Stephens had climbed the mountain via the 'normal' south col route on a commercially-styled sponsored charity expedition known as the "British 40th Anniversary Everest expedition", and whose number included a Satellite Engineer, two Base Camp managers and one member later categorised as an expedition "artist".²²⁷ On the summit she waved a flag with the expedition sponsors name – DHL.²²⁸ DHL, for their part, had managed to get their involvement noticed and name-checked in the article on Stephens' success, and featuring in a photograph in the *Daily Express'* coverage.²²⁹ From a mountaineering standpoint this ascent was far from remarkable and one of a very high 90 ascents during the spring of 1993.²³⁰ In terms of new mountaineering this was not a major achievement, but being the first British woman to climb the mountain generated new commercial opportunity for Stephens as a non-elite client climber exploiting this new form of the sport.

²²⁴ Paul Fuller, 'Lonely Triumph of Daredevil Rebecca', *Daily Express*, May 18, 1993.

²²⁵ Narayan, 'Mountain of Publicity'.

²²⁶ David Potter, 'British Exploratory Mountaineering in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century', (PhD Thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007), 306.

²²⁷ Salisbury, 'Himalayan Database', reference EVER-931-15.

²²⁸ Jim Curran, 'Everest Unplugged', *High* 128 (1993), 49.

²²⁹ Fuller, 'Lonely Triumph'.

²³⁰ Elizabeth Hawley, 'Everest in the Pre-Monsoon Season', *American Alpine Journal* 38 (1993), 207.

The well-known British actor Brian Blessed was a further example of someone who found that the rising public interest in mountaineering could work to his benefit as a non-elite client. Having previously failed to sell an idea of an authentic recreation of the efforts of George Mallory and Sandy Irvine on Everest in 1924, he still saw the potential in a climb with mass appeal, despite him being no more than an enthusiast himself.²³¹ However, by 1990 he was pursuing his dream of climbing in Mallory's footsteps. Whilst he had climbed before, his age and experience would put him some distance from that of elite mountaineers. And yet, after unsuccessful attempts to find support for his expedition from HTV, the BBC agreed to contribute to and cover the climb, reportedly paying some \$46,000 for oxygen alone.²³² Having the BBC on side suggested two things – firstly that there was already perceived public demand for this climb, and secondly that it would receive much coverage. The potential public interest was drummed up by a pre-expedition press conference with Blessed dressed in 1920s Mallory-esque clothing, an event which he described as “a complete success, the newspapers proving kind and encouraging”.²³³ Blessed was drawing public interest to his climb, which was associated to an international ‘Peace Climb’, tackling Everest via the north ridge. The route was not as popular or as straightforward as the south col, though it was the route that Mallory and Irvine attempted in 1924.²³⁴

For Blessed, the climb was unsuccessful, but the public-relations were not, with literature and television following the efforts on the mountain. Blessed would go on to attempt Everest two more times, including in 1993 when he refused to use oxygen on the south col.²³⁵ He again attempted the mountain in 1996, which included fund raising for the Gurkas, and for which he had attracted media

²³¹ Brian Blessed and John-Paul Davidson, *The Turquoise Mountain: Brian Blessed on Everest*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), 14–49.

²³² *Ibid.*, 58, 65.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 67.

²³⁴ By coincidence, Blessed was guided by David Breashears who had guided Dick Bass in 1985.

²³⁵ 'Brian Blessed', *Desert Island Discs*, BBC, June 4, 1995, online <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/player/p0093phm> (accessed August 25, 2012).

interest from ITV and was filmed by Matt Dickinson.²³⁶ Whilst his personal profit from these expeditions is not known, his public profile was certainly elevated, although, as we shall see shortly this was to the ire of some.

The enhanced opportunity for non-elite clients and coverage of their climbs was another reflection of the increasing individualisation within mountaineering in the post-1985 era. This was emphasised by the personal portrayal of Rebecca Stephens' experience which contrasted with the ascents of Everest in 1975 and 1953 where the team were celebrated. Indeed, this new guided form of climbing did tend to be highly individualistic, and the portrayal of such climbs gave little sense of the importance of team work. A successful summiting by a guide was not a celebrated moment, but a client reaching the summit was, and it was later turned into 'success ratios' in marketing future expeditions. Given that the sport had once focussed on team effort, recognising all members as contributing to an expedition's success (particularly in the Himalayas), this was reversed in commercial expeditions. In a further deviation, charity climbs have become popular, placing effective fundraising (more so than personal wealth) as an important component, though personal achievement has remained central.

Furthermore, as non-elite clients could also sell their story, the lay reader at home may not distinguish between truly elite climbers and those who were part of a guided climb. The way these climbers were portraying the sport was differing from earlier years, affecting the understanding of the sport by the public. A further reflection of the new popular perception of the sport could be gleaned from its literature. In the 1970s, expedition accounts tended to be quite technical and involve substantial detail, not least in the numerous appendices that would cover equipment performance and logistical solutions, and glossaries to cover specific terms. By the 1980s and 1990s this style of expedition account, whether by elites or clients, was less common. Instead, popular mountaineering books were

²³⁶ Ibid.; Adam Jacques, 'How we Met: Matt Dickinson & Brian Blessed', *The Independent*, February 19, 2012, online <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/how-we-met-matt-dickinson--brian-blessed-6988621.html> (accessed August 25, 2012).

less 'in depth' and often written in language that suited a less-informed audience – Joe Simpson's *Touching the Void* an example of an especially popular climbing book that had no such appendices, but became an important 'modern' view of mountaineering.²³⁷ Similarly, the 1990s saw a multitude of books about the widely reported Everest disasters in 1996 that were easy to engage with, and did not require the reader to establish a thorough understanding of mountaineering.

This, combined with the changing popular perception generated by the novelty approaches of Bonington and other elite climbers, is evidence that the sport was turning itself in ever smaller circles because of how it was sold to the public, with the perhaps inevitable outcome that novelty in any form was seen by the public as just as 'worthy' of coverage as a difficult ascent. Thus, any tensions between authenticity and commercialisation were reducing – commercialisation was winning through in every aspect of the modernisation of mountaineering.

Guides

For the likes of Brian Blessed to even have the opportunity of attempting Everest, competent guides were pivotal, and this role offered career opportunities for elite mountaineers, with the early 1990s particularly formative for British guides and companies.²³⁸ Non-elite clients in the greater ranges needed and expected substantial support, assistance and well-equipped and capable guides. Some just pursued guiding, forgoing other opportunities. Some elite climbers, finding that their media or sponsorship opportunities were limited by the lack of interest and greater competition, needed to diversify if they were to remain wedded to their chosen sport. High-altitude guiding became a key alternative to the communication-centric options pursued by elite-climbers, and thus guides

²³⁷ Joe Simpson, *Touching the Void*, (London: Vintage, 1998).

²³⁸ Ewen Macaskill, 'Climb any Mountain', *The Scotsman*, January 11, 1993.

positioned themselves as essential components in the changing sport and within companies as the experts needed to help less experienced clients reach their objectives.

Guiding could offer a new, often more reliable, source of income than sponsorship and media for the elite climber. Krakauer, citing Atkinson, noted the difficulties for the elite climber seeking to make a living and the rationale behind changing to become guides. In this passage Atkinson speaks about how Adventure Consultants was set up by two elite climbers, New Zealander's Rob Hall and Gary Ball:

A [sponsored] climber has to keep upping the ante. The next climb has to be harder and more spectacular than the last. It becomes an ever-tightening spiral; eventually you're not up to the challenge anymore... so they decided to switch direction and get into high-altitude guiding. When you're guiding you don't get to do the climbs you necessarily want to do; the challenge comes from getting clients up and down, which is a different sort of satisfaction. But it's a more sustainable career than endlessly chasing after sponsorship.²³⁹

Whilst, as examined earlier, sponsorship opportunities continued to exist for some, guiding became an established career option in its own right from the mid-1980s. Such was the case that a decade later it was noted how "more and more mountaineers are able to sustain their lifestyle as professionals by participating in an alpine ecotourism industry, an industry which, for various reasons, is undergoing rapid expansion".²⁴⁰ This suited some climbers well – they could work in the mountains where they wanted to ("As a guide, you *must* still want to do trips"²⁴¹), earn a reasonable income and, in a financial sense, "the lure of notoriety and the reliable paycheck will draw those hardcore weary of the hand-to-mouth [sponsorship-reliant] lifestyle".²⁴² Importantly, and unlike in other sports where coaches and trainers may be those whose physical prowess has declined but they wish to remain active in a sport,

²³⁹ Krakauer, *Into Thin Air*, 33.

²⁴⁰ Johnston and Edwards, 'Commodification of Mountaineering', 468.

²⁴¹ Tinker, 'Commercial Expeditions', 177. Emphasis in original.

²⁴² Steve House, 'Divided Interests and the Hope for American Alpinism', *American Alpine Journal*, (2000), 158-9.

a mountain guide needed to be as capable and often as adventurous as their expedition-focussed counterparts.²⁴³ Guiding opportunities did not become readily exploited in Britain in the late 1980s and it was only in the early 1990s that the industry really took off. In 1993, *The Scotsman* described such commercial guided expeditions as “a relatively new phenomenon in the Himalayas” particularly on the highest peaks, as previously such offerings were “confined to the smaller Himalayan peaks, below 8,000 metres”.²⁴⁴

Despite bringing new people to the mountains in the form of clients, within the climbing community guides had a fairly high reputation, whether Alpine or Himalayan. Under the organisation of the British Mountain Guides (BMG) and other federations, to be an effective guide one needed to be competent and proven.²⁴⁵ This competence would improve as they continued to guide, as Doug Scott noted at this time:

I do admire guides.... I mean, people like Roger [?] are so competent and other friends I've noticed. How their confidences increase – their expertise – how fast they are on mixed ground. People like Brian Hall, Paul Moores, San Gavin, since they've started to become guides and doing it all the time, and having to brush up on techniques and all that They've become very efficient, very economical....²⁴⁶

Some guides also attempted various and important ascents when not guiding clients, a fact that likely enhanced their reputation. One such individual was Mal Duff who was one of Britain's best-known

²⁴³ For example, Day and Carpenter note in relation to boxing that “Partly because of the physical demands of the sport, a career as a professional fighter was unlikely to be a long one so good fighters capitalized on their reputations by turning to teaching boxing skills” whilst “Many practitioners also developed careers as trainers”. Dave Day and Tegan Carpenter, *A History of Sports Coaching in Britain: Overcoming Amateurism*, (London: Routledge 2016), 12.

²⁴⁴ Ewen Macaskill, ‘Climb any Mountain’, *The Scotsman*, January 11, 1993.

²⁴⁵ Reflecting how these changes were not exclusive to Britain, a number of new international guiding associations emerged around this time, including the New Zealand Mountain Guides Association, many of whom became members of the growing International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation.

²⁴⁶ Doug Scott interviewed by Alan Hinkinson, c. 1992-1993, MHT, AHA/3/2/15.

guides of the 1980s, starting in Scotland taking clients on winter climbing courses. Guiding was initially used to fund his personal Himalayan expeditions in the 1980s before he moved on to guiding clients in the Himalaya.²⁴⁷ Though he earned his living as a professional guide, Duff did not join the BMG, yet this seemed to be no barrier to his successful guiding business, and outside of guiding he pursued other mountaineering challenges.²⁴⁸ Indeed, many well-known climbers also guided to earn an income. For example, in 1987 one of the Burgess twins was listed as a BMG guide based abroad, prepared to instruct or lead on expeditions amongst other activities,²⁴⁹ whilst Simon Yates also guided Scottish winter climbing.²⁵⁰ Not all elites became guides, but it could augment the other ways they earned a living in the mountains.

In 1985 there were 67 BMG guides, including one woman, Brede Arkless, who taught climbing courses as means to enjoy climbing full time.²⁵¹ By 1987 there were 69 guides based in the UK and seven abroad, with a further 20 aspirant members and trainees.²⁵² A 1987 BMG brochure explains that there were three main types of guide work – working with individuals on a specific objective, running courses, or working for agencies. The guides' daily rate in the UK was recommended to be a minimum of £40, and £50 in alpine climbing, although one would expect that Himalayan expedition climbs would result in considerably greater earning potential.²⁵³ Some found that – certainly in the Alps in the mid-1980s – such was the demand for guides that some like Roger Baxter-Jones “were season-long visitors to the Alps”.²⁵⁴ Rising demand in the greater ranges meant that bodies such as the ISM considered

²⁴⁷ Wells, *Who's Who*, 143-144.

²⁴⁸ Jim Perrin, 'Obituary: Malcolm Duff: Free Spirit of the Mountains', *The Guardian*, April 26, 1997.

²⁴⁹ 'Association of British Mountain Guides: 1987 Brochure', 1987.

²⁵⁰ Simon Yates, *The Flame of Adventure*, (London: Vintage, 2002), 166.

²⁵¹ Hilary Janes, 'Ascent of Woman', *The Times Saturday*, June 22, 1985.

²⁵² 'Association of British Mountain Guides: 1987 Brochure', 1987.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Roger Payne, 'Le boeuf roti des montagnes', British Mountaineering Guides, November 30, 2011, online <http://www.bmg.org.uk/index.php/eng/Community/Articles/Le-boeuf-roti-des-montagnes> (accessed October 9, 2012).

looking at running international expeditions, although new companies were soon set up to formalise their specialisation in this form of guiding.²⁵⁵

It seemed that greater ranges guiding often paid well, although evidence specific to British elite guides is difficult to come by. Even though he was not leading an expedition, the Russian Anatoli Bourkeev was paid \$25,000 to act as an experienced high-altitude guide on Everest in 1996 for an American expedition, with less experienced guides even earning \$10,000 for their work.²⁵⁶ In her work on the lives of high altitude Sherpas, Esther Bott found that not only was money the main reason for pursuing a career, but it also paid relatively very well. As one Sherpa, who worked for a British guiding company, explained, “It’s good money, much better money than trekking guiding because many more dangers. Not enjoy but that’s my job for money, just with clients. Only thing is money”.²⁵⁷ Another high-altitude Sherpa guide explained that their salary was equal to that of a qualified Nepalese doctor.²⁵⁸ In 1997, Jon Tinker, whose guiding company employed Sherpas, explained that “These guys earn big money - \$1000 for a summit day on Everest”.²⁵⁹ We can reasonably infer that the experiences of British guides would not be substantially different from their other Western peers, and if the income for Sherpa’s was the context, one imagines that high altitude guiding was lucrative.²⁶⁰

A handful of commercial guiding companies were set up in the early 1990s which helped to organise commercial climbing in a more formal manner. Salisbury and Hawley noted the formation of Alpine Ascents and Adventure Consultants in 1990, Mountain Madness and International Mountain Guides

²⁵⁵ Jane Last, ‘ISM’, *High* 52 (1987), 53.

²⁵⁶ Krakauer, *Into Thin Air*, 200.

²⁵⁷ Esther Bott, ‘Big Mountain, Big Name: Globalised Relations of Risk in Himalayan Mountaineering’, *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 7, no. 4 (2009), 295.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 297.

²⁵⁹ Jon Tinker, ‘Commercial Expeditions’, 175.

²⁶⁰ For more on the role of Sherpas see Sherry B. Ortner, *Life and Death on Mt. Everest: Sherpas and Himalayan Mountaineering*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1999).

in 1991, Amical Alpin in 1992, Himalayan Experience in 1994 and Himalayan Guides in 1995.²⁶¹ British companies were involved too – Jagged Globe, arguably the best known British-based commercial expedition outfit in the 2000s, was incorporated in 1995 after separating from Himalayan Kingdoms and going alone as a climbing organisation, rather than as part of a trekking operator, and Adventure Peaks in 2000.²⁶² For Jagged Globe, the three main commercial peaks of Everest, Cho Oyo and Ama Dablam were amongst the earliest Himalayan commercial expeditions they offered.²⁶³

Mal Duff was involved with companies such as Extreme Guiding International who, in 1986, were advertising expeditions to Ama Dablam. A half-page advert in *Mountain* magazine in 1986 (Figure 7) demonstrates the type of advertising that was being used in the specialist press to attract clients from the climbing community (who may or may not be experienced), and who could afford it.²⁶⁴ Mal Duff and Ascent Travel also advertised full page in *High* magazine in 1988 under the banner “Climb on Everest”, giving trekkers and mountaineers opportunity to join

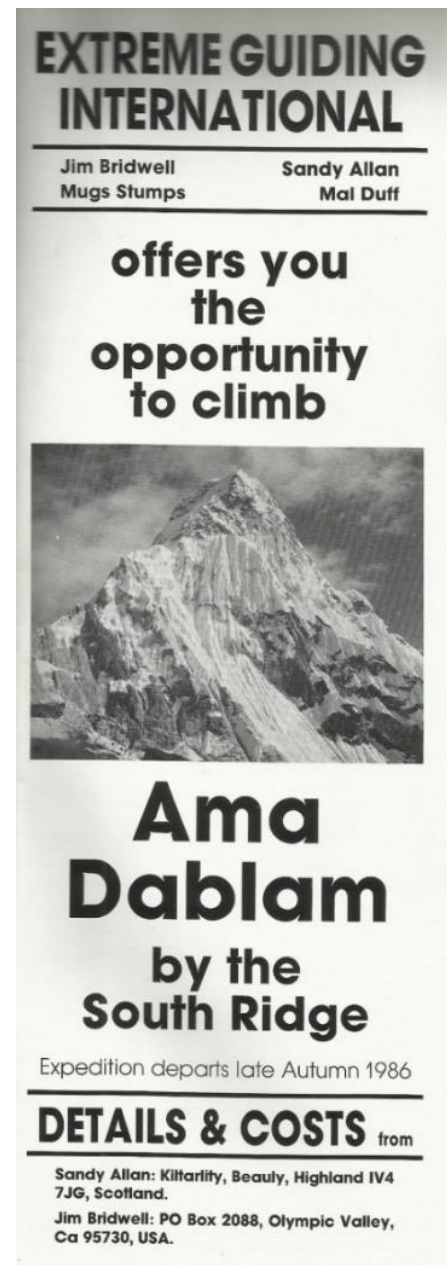


Figure 7 - Extreme Guiding International advert, 1986.

²⁶¹ Salisbury and Hawley, *Himalaya by Numbers*, 6.

²⁶² Steve Bell, 'Our History', *Jagged Globe*, online <http://www.jagged-globe.co.uk/jg/history.html> (accessed August 20, 2016).

²⁶³ Jagged Globe's first expedition to Everest was in September 1993, Ama Dablam in April 1992, and Cho Oyo in April 1993, online <https://www.jagged-globe.co.uk/jg/history.html>; <https://www.jagged-globe.co.uk/climb/exp/i/ama+dablam.html#reports>; <https://www.jagged-globe.co.uk/climb/exp/i/cho+oyu.html#reports> (accessed September 10, 2017).

²⁶⁴ Extreme Guiding International advert, *Mountain* 109 (1986), 5.

the British Everest West Ridge expedition where they could set foot on (but not attempt) Everest, as well as enjoy some of the neighbouring 6,000m peaks.²⁶⁵

Other companies followed a similar approach with Ascent Travel, advertising in 1989, again in *Mountain*, just one other example. In this advert (Figure 8) they advertised expeditions to three 8,000m peaks (Dhaulagiri, Mansalu and Annapurna) and one 7,000m peak (Pumori).²⁶⁶

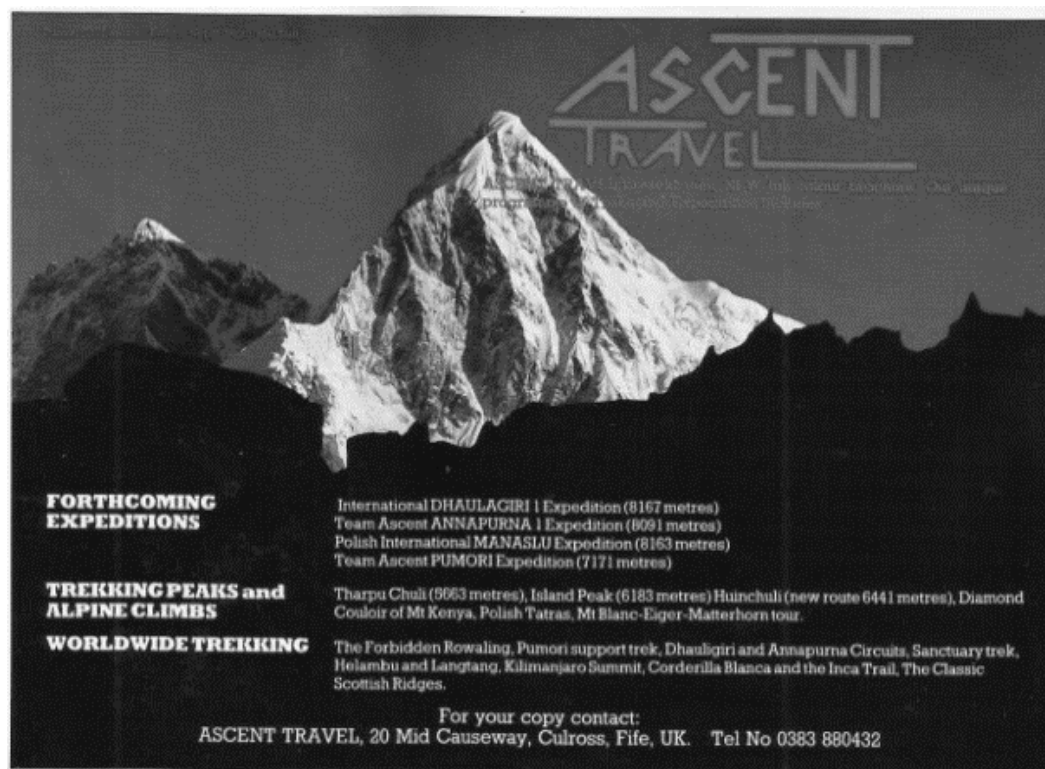


Figure 8 - Ascent Travel advert, 1989

These adverts featured in the specialist climbing press, appealing to a specific group of new consumers who were already interested in the field. Some of the terminology and place names would be familiar to such audiences although the use of words such as ‘extreme’ and explicit use of mountain heights was beginning to shape how these climbs would be sold. By the mid-1990s, guided climbs were heavily

²⁶⁵ Ascent Travel advert, *High* 66 (1988), 51.

²⁶⁶ Ascent Travel advert, *Mountain* 130 (1989), 56.

advertised in British climbing magazines such as *High*. The January 1994 issue alone contained adverts for expeditions by Out There Trekking to Shishapangma and “a guided ascent” of the Great Trango Tower,²⁶⁷ and, more remarkably, a Himalayan Guides advert for the first British ascent of Lhotse West Face, as well as to Ama Dablam (£3,280), Everest via the North Ridge (\$18,400 USD) and Cho Oyu “Normal” route (\$6,000 USD).²⁶⁸

In a sense, guiding in the mountains had come full circle. During what became known as the ‘Golden Age’ in the mid nineteenth-century, locals who were familiar with terrain in the Alps were hired to help guide the climbing aristocracy claim first summits. The guides were an integral part of the mountaineering system – indeed, the Alpine Club had made it mandatory to climb with a guide, and many guides made strong reputations for themselves – so the parallels with the post-1985 guiding in the Himalayas are evident.²⁶⁹ Some of the best known nineteenth-century guides found a lucrative and full-time opportunity in guiding, and the role was seen as one which was “transformed... from a task for a subaltern, to the most prestigious and even definitive alpine experience”.²⁷⁰ Guides were often heavily relied on by their clients, not at all dissimilar to the guide-client relationship in this more modern era, and perhaps demonstrating how the demand for such a service has always existed, and that it is its boundaries that have extended. Now, as in the nineteenth-century, being an elite guide where one could “sell [their] expertise” was a largely meritocratic profession.²⁷¹ With success rates and reputation important factors for guides, visible results achieved through competent guiding was central, as was the need to be able to demonstrate their ability in order to gain client’s trust and, as a result, an income.

²⁶⁷ Out There Trekking advert, *High* 134 (1994), 81.

²⁶⁸ Himalayan Guides advert, *High* 134 (1994), 82.

²⁶⁹ C. D. Cunningham, *The Pioneers of the Alps*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington Ltd, 1888), 16.

²⁷⁰ Kerwin Lee Klein, ‘A Vertical World: The Eastern Alps and Modern Mountaineering’, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 24, no. 4 (2011), 534.

²⁷¹ Johnston and Edwards, ‘Commodification of Mountaineering’, 467.

It is notable that this new innovative method of carving out a career in the mountains emerged at a time that Turner has described as “the economic high point of Thatcher’s period as prime minister. The repeated claims that she wanted to build a land fit for entrepreneurs finally appeared to be bearing fruit”, as it did for some guides.²⁷² However, despite the new entrepreneurial activity and changing public demand, there was resistance to this newly expanded sphere of mountaineering. These expeditions were criticised due to their commercial nature, the placement of ill-equipped clients on major mountains, and the damage to the landscape that was being created.²⁷³ Perhaps most influentially, Edmund Hillary expressed his opinions on this new development, citing both the impact of greater numbers of poorly skilled climbers on the mountain being a recipe for disaster and the environmental consequences of the growing number of expeditions. In his own words:

Increasingly the mountain [Everest] is littered with scores of aluminium ladders and thousands of feet of fixed rope. Deep tracks are beaten up the mountains by dozens of eager feet. Even on the Hillary Step near the summit there is usually a choice of three ropes to ascend... Many inexperienced people have been conducted to the summit by expert professional guides. For some years I have been forecasting disaster in this area if the weather should deteriorate, and, unfortunately, this has happened... Guided climbing has proved successful at alpine levels but it can be very dangerous above 26,000 feet. The unpredictable factors of altitude and weather then play their parts and life can be balanced precariously on a knife-edge if team members are inexperienced.²⁷⁴

Furthermore, in a 2003 interview Hillary remarked that “One of Hall’s [a guide on Everest in 1996] clients told me that he’d never been on a mountain. But he had paid his \$65,000 – or whatever – and

²⁷² Turner, *Rejoice*, 2795.

²⁷³ For example, see Hillary, *View from the Summit*, 298; Krakauer, *Into Thin Air*, 23; Stephen Venables, 'Balancing Act', *Geographical* 70, no. 7 (1998), 6; Stephen Venables, 'Back to the Future', *Climbing* 156, (1995), 100.

²⁷⁴ Hillary, *View from the Summit*, 298.

felt he was going to be taken to the top and back safely for that money... he told us he wasn't a good climber".²⁷⁵ Others felt that the demands of clients, and the potential financial backing they might receive, was making climbing into an extravagance. It is this that has been criticised by climber Peter Habler, who remarked "It has nothing to do with adventure anymore. People are racing to become the fattest, the thinnest, the youngest, the oldest up Everest and this has nothing to do with mountaineering".²⁷⁶

Yet despite this perception of dumbing down of mountaineering, publicity was nonetheless available for client climbers who climbed high peaks by their common routes. Speaking in 1996 about some climbers who tried to generate publicity despite being a client, Stephen Venables explained that "you reach a certain position of fame and it becomes self-perpetuating. You call a press conference and everyone will attend. At its most extreme, you get everybody reporting the thoughts of a ridiculous windbag like Brian Blessed who has set himself up as an authority on Everest".²⁷⁷ Ed Douglas also summed up the media interest in mountaineering, explaining how;

Newspapers and television are interested either in disasters or adventurers hunting attention and sponsorship... Fame and wealth are determined in mountaineering by your back-story and the competence of your publicist. Stunts like the so-called Seven Summits are meaningless as mountaineering achievements, but their very glibness attracts followers and shifts products.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Sullivan Robert, 'Q&A: Sir Edmund Hillary', *Time*, September 12, 2003, online http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1981290_1981293,00.html (accessed January 28, 2012).

²⁷⁶ 'Welcome to Mt Everest Theme Park', *The Scotsman*, May 26, 2003, online http://www.scotsman.com/news/welcome_to_mt_everest_theme_park_1_880691 (accessed January 21, 2018).

²⁷⁷ Beaumont, 'Thirst to be First'.

²⁷⁸ Ed Douglas, 'Soul Traders: 150 Years of Peddling Adventures', *Alpine Journal* 112 (2007), 129.

In some quarters, the national media recognised the commercial opportunities that were presented to clients – in a 1995 piece in *The Guardian* Emma Brooker noted that “By 1993, when the inexperienced Rebecca Stephens became the first British woman to ‘stand on top of the world’, the activity was starting to look like a pastime for derring-doers with a flair for PR who needed to improve their cv (sic)”.²⁷⁹

The result was that some clients were unsuitable for the task at hand and relied completely on their guides. Yet they felt they deserved to reach the summit having paid substantial sums to be part of a commercial expedition. This situation, with the wealthy rather than the capable being in these environments, was a sign of change. Some feared that this would only worsen, as the demand from more experienced amateur climbers reduced, and guiding companies “will be forced to take on lesser qualified clientele”.²⁸⁰ Doug Scott clearly did not regard paying clients as true mountaineers, implying that if they could not look after themselves – in other words if they were entirely reliant on their guides – they should not be on these mountains. After the 1996 Everest tragedy he remarked;

I would assume the average member of the public thinks of a mountaineer as someone taking complete responsibility for their lives... this entails making value judgements such as whether a route will go, how you will pass it, taking in potential dangers, whether to bivvy the night, when to back off or push on, but these clients rely completely on their professional guides to make these calls.²⁸¹

Some of the people in the new, wide, pool of non-elite clients expanded the coverage and sponsorship and other commercial opportunities that had previously been available only to elite climbers who had drawn the public’s attention. Trevor Braham explained in the *Alpine Journal* in the late 1990s that “The

²⁷⁹ Brooker, ‘Public Lives’.

²⁸⁰ Johnston and Edwards, ‘Commodification of Mountaineering’, 471.

²⁸¹ Alan Thomson, ‘Himalayan Humbug’, *The Herald*, August 30, 1997.

publicity cult that is fashionable today, relating to every form of human activity, now exercises a strong influence upon the once eccentric and unintelligible sport of mountain climbing,” and it was as a result of this that clients found brand new opportunities to write, speak or in other ways sell their experiences not as elite mountaineers, but instead by re-treading popular routes.²⁸² Returning to old routes made sense in the context of growing forms of tourism that facilitated visiting specific landmarks and places of authentic sport heritage. Stunts and gimmicks such as the Seven Summits that had become a status symbol for executives and climbers, minor ‘firsts’, the oldest and youngest climbers and the more recent extension to the Seven Summits – the 737 Challenge comprising the Seven Summits and the Poles – continued to attract media interest and earning or commercial opportunities.²⁸³

Guiding in the greater ranges brought new professional opportunities. Guides facilitated this new group of non-elite climbers who were pursuing an approach to climbing by paying to be led. The people who took up the option to be guided were invariably wealthy given the costs of what was, to them, a pastime or hobby driven by a desire to visit some of the most iconic mountain landscapes in the world. As the numbers of non-elite client climbers continued to increase, the sport in the greater ranges in some ways was being returned to one that was limited by class rather than ability.

Although guided expeditions were just a subset of the sport, they were probably the most visible. For the guides, reputation was vital and so commercial imperatives through marketing and publicity were major considerations. Just as in the nineteenth-century it was typically the client who would take the plaudits, whilst the guide quietly returned to the background in the knowledge that they had played an important role in success on a mountain in exchange for a pay-cheque. By bringing people who may not have been suitable into the mountains, commercial expeditions were, though, creating new

²⁸² Trevor Braham, ‘The Effects of Change on Mountaineering Ethics’, *Alpine Journal* 102 (1997), 163.

²⁸³ Oelz, O., ‘The Seven Summits: On the Highest Mountains of all Continents’, *Alpine Journal* 96 (1991-2), 178.

problems in such a hostile environment. Vause sums up the seemingly perverse logic of these commercial expeditions, in that they arose from climbers who

In an attempt to make a living doing what they loved to do they allowed people who had no business being on Everest, due to lack of experience and preparation... to not only endanger themselves, but put the lives of the other climbers on the mountain... in jeopardy.²⁸⁴

Nonetheless, the pressures of rising demand and matching growth in supply made this development inevitable as guided climbing became fully established. Unlike most other sports, the lack of a governing body prepared to impose rules and regulation around such climbing, and the international opportunity for non-elite clients (clients not being limited to a guiding outfit from their own country) allowed a free market to operate. With relatively few restrictions, the fact that the guiding opportunities grew so rapidly in the post-1985 period suggested that there was much pent up demand and the guiding outfits were able to capitalise on this throughout (and beyond) the period in question.

Perhaps the introduction of guiding in the Himalayas in 1985 was mountaineering's *Gidget* moment. The film *Gidget* released in the late 1960s transformed American surfing, otherwise a niche, disorganised and individualistic pursuit, into something that the masses started to enjoy, whether of high or low ability. The influence of the film was so substantial that surfing at this time is regarded "as either being pre-Gidget or post-Gidget".²⁸⁵ Ormrod, citing Warshaw, explains how many elite surfers bemoaned the film and the increase in the number of surfers at beaches like Malibu. As Warshaw noted "For many surfers the real search for the perfect wave has been less to do with adventure, romance and the pursuit of new experiences and more with just getting the hell away [from the

²⁸⁴ Mikel Vause, 'Mountaineering: The Heroic Expression of Our Age', USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P-14, (2000), 84, online www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_p014/rmrs_p014_083_086.pdf (accessed January 21, 2018).

²⁸⁵ *Riding Giants*, Directed by Stacey Peralta. Forever Films – Studio Canal, 2004.

masses].²⁸⁶ For mountaineering, 1985 saw the creation of new informal rules that defined how people could participate – in Hardy’s terms, a new ‘game form’.²⁸⁷ This had not been developed by any central representative body, but was the natural evolution of the market for this sport and one that would change the practice of it forever.

To cater for these non-elite climbers, elite mountaineering did suffer. More elite climbers seeking a vocation were reverting to guiding rather than commercial and sponsorship-led mountaineering, resulting in skills being taken away from the leading elite edge of the sport. Steve House noted in 2000 that “we have seen guiding jobs on 8000-meter peaks draw talent out of the core of alpinism”,²⁸⁸ whilst historian Walt Unsworth also noted that there has been a paucity in the number of mountaineering expeditions tackling new objectives on Everest specifically, explaining how

...of the dozens of expeditions in the intervening 10 years [up to c. 2000], very few have shown any real initiative. There have been few attempts to break new ground or even to repeat some of the harder routes. The mountain has entered a gimmicky phase.²⁸⁹

The uptake in more reliable guiding was hindering the development of mountaineering in terms of its objectives and difficulty, perversely meaning that the growing democratisation of climbing over the previous decades had started to dilute advances in the sport as the modern guiding movement took hold. The introduction of new non-elite clients, including those who sought and received publicity, and the high-altitude guide undoubtedly marked a major and permanent change to the sport.

²⁸⁶ Joan Ormrod, “‘Just the Lemon Next to the Pie’: Apocalypse, History and the Limits of Myth in *Big Wednesday* (1978)”, *Scope Online Journal of Film Studies* 1, 2005, online <http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=1&id=6> (accessed December 23, 2012).

²⁸⁷ Hardy, ‘Entrepreneurs, Organizations, and the Sport Marketplace’, 17.

²⁸⁸ House, ‘Divided Interests’, 158.

²⁸⁹ Unsworth, *Everest*, 536.

Conclusion

During this period, the old guard, Bonington in particular, continued to hold a grasp on the career and earning opportunities available in mountaineering through entrepreneurial skills and sheer determination. Others found success through hard work and good fortune. Being the highest quality climber was not determinative in succeeding professionally, a point made clearer by the non-elite clients who themselves could earn or improve their career from mountaineering success. To be a client climber in the greater ranges, one needed to be wealthy enough to afford a trip, or have sufficient backstory to obtain financial support through publicity. Although the sport broadened out its participants, the result was that pure ability was far from a critical factor in the search for money.

The new earning potential for non-elite climbers was also an example of economics dictating the direction of mountaineering. In reality, market pressures had influenced the sport over the last 60 years, part of the continuity of its transformation. Despite the opposition in the 1960s and 1970s to some elements of the sports' modernisation, economic pressures created opportunities for Bonington, Scott and others to make a living from climbing at the expense of traditional climbing 'values'. As Skow has explained, "The most strenuous effort is not on the wind-racked ridges above Camp 4; it is in corporate conference rooms, where idlers with powerful legs try to persuade achievers in powerful suits to pay for their vacations".²⁹⁰ Alongside some expeditions being set up to run as businesses, it is clear that the organisation of mountaineering continued to change.

Some of mountaineering's further modernisation in the 1985-2000 period reflected developments in society as a whole. British, indeed international, culture saw more people seeking thrills and active recreation. The rise of the executive adventurer was a notable example, and this fuelled demand for the guided climbing outfits and, therefore, professional guides that sprung up in this era, helped by

²⁹⁰ John Skow, 'Climbing Mount Everest: What it Takes to Reach the Summit', *Time*, June 3, 1989, 14.

the effective marketing they used. In many ways, this was a group of consumers who acted and thought very differently about mountaineering than the traditional 'viewer' in Britain.

Moving into the twenty-first century, the British public's attention was drawn again to mountaineering through other novelties, demonstrating the sustainability of mountaineering's public appeal and the on-going importance of publicity skills. In 2012, Kenton Cool carried an Olympic medal awarded in 1924 to climbers on the first full expedition to Everest, to the summit of the mountain, fulfilling a pledge made by the medal's recipient, Edward Strutt.²⁹¹ This was not the only occasion to link 'tradition' with the modern face of the sport.²⁹² However, in reality Cool's climb was part of a heavily commercial approach. Indeed, the ascent itself was relatively standard, taking the south col route and one of hundreds of such ascents in recent years. However, the novelty angle ensured that the public's attention was caught, and that sponsors including Samsung and Adidas, were involved and mainstream news regularly reported on the climb.²⁹³ Cool used social media to publicise the climb. Twitter was used to trail the climb, with the pre-launch including tweets such as "Sat in a cool coffee shop in Toronto with something very special with me...its part of a 90year old story!! SO Excited" (sic),²⁹⁴ and, "Monday morning we launch the next expedition in the media...stay posted...can't wait, its been 2 years getting it all together!!"²⁹⁵ Twitter proved to be an effective advertising medium for headline sponsors Samsung, with Cool tweeting from on the mountain with reference to Samsung

²⁹¹ Ed Douglas, 'BMC Backs Kenton Cool Everest Medals Expedition', March 26, 2012, online

<http://www.thebmc.co.uk/kenton-cool-everest-olympic-medals-expedition> (accessed February 27, 2013).

²⁹² Birrell has explained how the discovery of Mallory's body in 1999 "reminded the public of the romance of past Everest adventures" and "went a long way to remove the unsavoury reputation of commercialism on Everest". Susan Birrell, 'Approaching Mt. Everest; On Intertextuality and the Past as Narrative', *Journal of Sport History* 34, no. 1 (2007), 16.

²⁹³ Kenton Cool website, sponsors page, online <http://www.kentoncool.com/sponsors/> (accessed February 27, 2013).

²⁹⁴ Kenton Cool, [KentonCool]. (March 15, 2012). Sat in a cool coffee shop in Toronto with something very special with me...its part of a 90year old story!! SO Excited [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KentonCool/status/180328901074096128>.

²⁹⁵ Kenton Cool, [KentonCool]. (March 23, 2012). Monday morning we launch the next expedition in the media...stay posted...can't wait, its been 2 years getting it all together!! [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KentonCool/status/183310559494668288>.

products – “Well no signal at all on top but Galaxy note [Samsung product] works at 8850m. Thanks to Samsung for making the dream real”.²⁹⁶ Potentially an odd sponsor for such a pursuit, Samsung must have expected positive publicity and brand awareness, and were not the first handset producers to sponsor the sport.²⁹⁷ Associating the summit of Everest with a phone manufacturer and expressing this in a tweet epitomised the new popular means by which the sport was being sold, and also represented what mountaineering now meant to the casual viewer at home.

This recent example shows how far commercial pressures have grown in influence and relevance. As such opportunities and corporate interests increased, the sport has adapted to welcome them rather than oppose them, demonstrating the increased maturity of mountaineering and climbing. Climbing in this period, in its various guises, had shown that social status, gender and class no longer mattered as career climbers came from all walks of life. Instead, it was economics that drove change in the sport. The wannabe executive-explorer, the manufacturer trying to make inroads into a growing market and the new elite climber seeking to make a personal fortune, were all departures from the mountaineering of old, and the sheer diversity of opportunity set the post-1985 era in contrast to the relatively limited options in earlier years. As the commodification of mountaineering increases more and more, the direction moving forward seems unclear. In 2001, *Time* magazine volunteered the idea that it could become part of reality-TV – “is it just a matter of time until we’re glued to Everest Survivor?” it wondered.²⁹⁸ Whilst its interviewee believed not, given the economic influence on mountaineering it is not entirely inconceivable.

²⁹⁶ Kenton Cool, [KentonCool]. (May 25, 2012). Well no signal at all on top but Galaxy note works at 8850m. Thanks to Samsung for making the dream real. #samsung2012 #fb [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KentonCool/status/205986483520286720>.

²⁹⁷ For instance, Motorola backed a 1999 British expedition to a mountain range between China and Tajikistan. ‘Britons Reach “Roof of the World”’, BBC News, July 20, 1999, online <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/398963.stm> (accessed August 6, 2016).

²⁹⁸ Daffyd Roderick, ‘High-Wired Mountain Act’, *Time*, June 4, 2011, online <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1957381,00.html> (accessed April 28, 2012).

Chapter 5. Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated how economic factors affected elite British mountaineering in a fundamental way in the post-war years. The role of money, a desire to earn and increasing commercialisation, coupled with a release from amateur norms, irreversibly changed the sport for both its participants and consumers. For the former, mountaineering could become a career, or at least a transient earning opportunity, if one had both the ability and salesmanship. For the latter, mountaineering was communicated in new ways, with new types of achievement and novelty used to gain traction. This served to increase and diversify the audience for mountaineering which improved the prospects for career climbers.

Through examination and analysis of a wide variety of sources including not before used, revealing archival materials, expedition reports and magazines, the rapidly accelerating change of mountaineering as it responded to economic pressures has been illustrated. Although the nature of change differed in each of the three eras covered in this study, the cumulative effect was considerable, leaving elite mountaineering looking very different in 2000 than it had fifty years before. Central to this was the desire to earn from climbing. In 1986 Hardy asked “has the rise of sport as commodity meant strangulation of sport as play?”¹ In mountaineering one can conclude that as a bare minimum, economic pressures certainly had such an effect. It was still ‘play’ to the extent that many of the individuals involved had a strong desire to be in mountainous landscapes, but it was unquestionably work for them too. Guiding, writing, seeking endorsements and satisfying corporate demands meant it was not just the pursuit of leisure alone. The fact that there was even such an opportunity for a sport which was previously reserved and traditional, illustrated the scale of the change.

In evidencing the extent of mountaineering’s transformation, this thesis has focussed on four themes: the reduction of amateur influence, entrepreneurialism, the media and commercialisation. Economic

¹ Stephen Hardy, ‘Entrepreneurs, Organizations, and the Sport Marketplace: Subjects in Search of Historians’, *Journal of Sport History* 13, no. 1 (1986): 33.

influences affected all four in different ways. Given the traditionally projected history of the sport, the decline of amateur influences may have come as a surprise. However, the sport did relatively swiftly embrace a meritocratic approach, kick-started in 1953 by the selection of Hunt as Everest expedition leader, and shortly thereafter the selection of working-class climbers on other Himalayan climbs. This was followed by the important merger between two of the main bodies in British mountaineering – the Alpine Club and the Alpine Climbing Group – a significant step in removing the social barriers that had hitherto determined the type of climber who could pursue the sport at an elite level.

However, amateur ideals were not entirely discarded. The growth of more commercial elite expeditions in the 1970s led to the re-emergence of debates centred on climbing ethics. Although ultimately having little impact, they did demonstrate that as the community organised itself through the vehicle of the newly popular climbing magazines, these ideas still resonated with many. There was ultimately a degree of acceptance of elite climbers and their aspirations, mixed with some jealousy, and the sport naturally evolved into more lightweight styles and alternative commercial pursuits as a result of over-supply and changing public demand, rather than solely in response to ethical debates. These re-emerged again – still, seemingly, without clout – in commentary of guided climbs in the 1990s.

Opinions which recall earlier amateur values do still remain in some elements of the sport. In an influential 2012 blog, Pete Beal aired his worries at how far removed mountaineering had become from its early ideals as a “significant pursuit that created and carried real personal meaning”.² With echoes of Ian McNaught-Davis, Beal cited the prominence of sponsored climbers and their public activities of blogging and video and photographic appearances, as well as the appetite shown for this by the consumer, and asked whether the “climbing environment is reaching a tipping point in terms

² Peter Beal, ‘Sell, Sell, Sell: Is There an Alternative?’, *Mountains and Water blog*, March 27, 2012, online <http://www.mountainsandwater.com/2012/03/sell-sell-sell-is-there-alternative.html> (accessed September 23, 2017).

of how much more commodification it can stand before a total vitiation of the core of the sport is achieved”.³ By harking back to the sport’s less commercial roots, Beal pursued similar arguments to those who opposed guided climbers from the 1980s, and craved the earlier values which elevated the battle of climber and rock, without the concerns of sponsorship, image or marketing. As in the 1970s though, these arguments held little sway and stood little chance of genuinely resisting commercial developments.

Although becoming more meritocratic, this was not a comprehensive shift. The climber who best exhibited the potential for professional mountaineering was Chris Bonington and his success throughout almost the entire chronology of this thesis is further testament to the uniqueness of the sport. In many sports, a professional had a limited time in which they were prominent.⁴ Climbing was different though in that Bonington and others have had lengthy careers in the high mountains even whilst not necessarily having the greatest ability for the same duration. Whereas the typical climber of earlier decades sought mountaineering experiences for various reasons including escapism, these new climbers – not privileged enough to view this as just a form of leisure – sought to also make it a form of work. The changes in the 1960s made this not only an aspiration; earning a living was a new reality, though in order to achieve this, ability, entrepreneurialism and sales skills such as those demonstrated by Bonington were required.

The small number of successful career climbers created their own opportunities by connecting new partners and interests to mountaineering, widening its appeal and breaking it out of its pre-Everest sub-culture. They began by developing the traditional earning routes, lecturing and writing, and supplementing this with television work, connections with newspapers and bringing on board commercial organisations. This was self-initiated. The lack of meaningful governance or administration

³ Ibid.

⁴ For example, see Wray Vamplew, *Pay Up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain 1875-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17.

actively involved in the elite aspect of the sport was a major trait that set climbing apart from most other sports. Whilst there were elements of power, the fact that the sport could not be codified and was multi-faceted, as illustrated by Tejada-Flores, meant that it evolved without direction or dictation by a single group.⁵ Individuals could try new ideas and see what gained traction as they turned the sport into work. This helped to make it more responsive to entrepreneurial interventions, and it proved to be these climbers who could identify and exploit opportunities that could generate an income.

Breivik's modern interpretation of sports such as climbing is that "To a larger extent than in mainstream sports the alternative sports have people in the driver's seat that can influence the development and future of sports".⁶ For mountaineering this was true, and the entrepreneurial individuals generated interest from a wide range of commercial partners – both media and corporate. These initially pivoted around the media who paid climbers for their stories and photographs, and the emerging specialist retail and manufacturing sectors. As the former of these options diminished in the 1970s, attention turned to corporate entities without ties to mountaineering. Such companies realised that its imagery and momentary high profile could be useful for them, as well as the potential of being linked with an event of major national interest. These partners included the likes of Barclays Bank, DHL, Rolex, Bull Computers, National Express and Fullers Brewery. Despite their diversity, they rarely remained invested, unlike some parts of the media who had retained their connections from decades earlier, and hence it was for them more of a commercial and branding opportunity.

In some cases, these corporate brands influenced how expeditions were run, but their lasting influence was at a macro level. By dangling the prospect of sponsorship, climbers who hoped to attract these companies knew that they needed a climb that would hold wide appeal. The value of any commercial backing was magnified if extensive publicity could be secured. This, in turn, led climbers

⁵ Lito Tejada-Flores, 'Games Climbers Play', *Alpine Journal* 73 (1968), 46.

⁶ Gunnar Breivik, 'Trends in Adventure Sports in a Post-Modern Society', *Sport in Society* 13, no. 2 (2010), 260, 268.

to deliberately integrate sensationalism, novelty, or exaggerated risk into their expeditions. Such climbs would be more likely to gain public attention and thus be of more interest to sponsors. It was this shift – appealing to sponsorship – that made a lasting impression. By pushing climbers to think beyond a summit objective, and serving to narrow the authentic understanding that the wider public had, publicity was the key to much of the post-war modernisation.

So important was effective publicity-raising that to have a chance as a career climber one needed two things: one, to be a genuinely good climber and two, to be a genuinely good self-publicist. The latter surpassed the former in terms of importance by the late 1980s and 1990s both for elite climbers and for guided climbers. This change reflects Lasch's emotive view that "What corrupts an athletic performance... is not professionalism or competition but the presence of an unappreciative, ignorant audience and the need to divert it with sensations extrinsic to the performance".⁷ This has been linked to the view of Hughson *et al* that "To the extent that trivialisation relates to popularisation: the popularisation of sports to appeal to as broad an audience as possible leads to a lack of seriousness".⁸ Essentially, wider appeal meant simplifying how mountaineering was portrayed which was a direct result of the economic pressures exerted on it. New challenges, novel approaches and well known individuals helped to move recreational interest well beyond the prospect of the death of those involved.⁹

A further change that emerged in period was a greater emphasis on the individual, moving away from the prominence of the team. This was caused not only by the fall in amateur influence, but also by the increasing economic implications for individuals of their own performances. One of the reasons Polley attributes to the growth in advertising and sponsorship was the rise in individualised sports such as

⁷ Christopher Lasch, 'The Corruption of Sports', *The New York Review*, April 28 1977, online

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1977/apr/28/the-corruption-of-sports/> (accessed August 19, 2015).

⁸ John Hughson, David Inglis and Marcus Free, *The Uses of Sport: A Critical Study*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 58-9.

⁹ J. A. Walter, 'Death as Recreation: Armchair Mountaineering', *Leisure Studies* 3 (1984), no. 1.

golf and squash, and mountaineering can be added to this description too.¹⁰ The changing individualised character of the sport became increasingly overt in the post-war period, culminating in guided climbers becoming the focus of attention despite them only being fortunate enough to reach major summits when supported by a team of genuine mountaineering experts. This was also reflected in climber motivations. Whereas previously climbing was seen as in the nation's interests, motivations became more personal, in part due to the monetary aspect. Despite the media still referring to climbing as a link to the past, the reality was different, and coverage did also frequently focus on individuals and their own stories.

This, and the increasingly personal approach taken by elite climbers, reflected the importance of reputation and individual gain that came to dominate earning opportunities. The prominence of club formations, described by Osborne in relation to the pre-war years as "a defining feature of sporting identity", also fell away under the more individualised model.¹¹ For the climbers central to this study, associations such as the MEC, BMC, Alpine Club or any local clubs were not a defining feature. Personal pursuit, their own brand and their commercial opportunities were of greater significance than the club that they may have represented. Clubs did continue to play an important role for the wider public and grassroots climbing community, but not for these elite career climbers.

Earning from mountaineering became a very real opportunity, from relatively limited scope in the 1950s and 1960s before increasing considerably over subsequent decades. By interesting the media, gaining publicity, demonstrating the value of corporate involvement, as well as appealing to a wider public demand, the best elite climbers stood a chance of earning a living. Although it was not open for

¹⁰ Martin Polley, *Moving the Goalposts: A History of Sport and Society in Britain since 1945*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 70-1.

¹¹ Carol Osborne, 'Gender and the Organisation of British Climbing c.1857-1955', (PhD Thesis, University of Lancaster, 2004), 433.

many, the life of a career climber was manageable. As Simon Yates reflected, thanks to the earning potential for climbers it meant that:

Friends and associates, who for years had lived in squalor and poverty, were now driving around in fast cars, paid for by sponsorship deals with companies or winnings from climbing-wall competitions... even more were working for clothing and equipment companies, and there were others building climbing walls.¹²

Despite Yates' reflections, it is likely that climbing professionals rarely made a fortune over the long term. In 1996, even Bonington remarked that "There are no very rich climbers in Britain. I earn a living, and I am also putting something back into the sport".¹³ For non-elite clients, any income and status was more limited, perhaps with the exception of Rebecca Stephens who successfully marketed herself after being the first British woman to summit Everest. Perhaps the greatest draw was that these elite climbers could enjoy their pastime as part of their everyday life – something that held great appeal and motivation and which was the cause of envy from their non-professional peers.¹⁴

The thesis has focussed on those key individuals who could make a career from climbing. So rich is the material and scope for further economic analysis of this subject, the study has not had space to consider the implications on the grassroots climber. For instance, endorsement of manufactured products set trends in motion which influenced purchasing habits and retailers' fortunes. Similarly, the evolution of more competitive aspects of climbing, especially on indoor climbing walls, brought prize money and other financial dimensions. Whilst these are unquestionably economic implications of the modern climbing and mountaineering world, concentrating on elite climbers has meant forgoing these intriguing areas, which are ripe for further examination. So too is research into those

¹² Simon Yates, *The Flame of Adventure*, (London: Vintage, 2002), 165-6.

¹³ Natalie Graham, 'Everest Knight Keeps Firm Grip on his Pension', *Daily Express*, 17 January, 1996.

¹⁴ For example, see Will Gadd, 'Selling Out by Selling Climbing and Other Myths', *American Alpine Journal*, (2000), 154-156; Ed Douglas, 'The Observer Profile: Chris Bonington', *The Observer*, May 30, 1999.

elite climbers such as Ian Clough who did not pursue careers despite the potential being available, as well as that of the newer paying client base. The cost of being a client on a Himalayan expedition may be prohibitive for many, though a real test of this large cross-section of climbers is how well they represented wider society. Research in areas such as these could serve to broaden our understanding of economic influences on British mountaineering which underpin so much of the sport, whether at the elite or grassroots level.

Perhaps most significantly, this thesis flags up the significance of studying niche sports for what they can reveal and challenge. Further economic histories that heed Hardy's call for work in this area could continue to enhance our awareness of British history beyond the most popular sports. Niche sports ought not be dismissed – their coverage may be relatively fleeting, but they can still be defining within British history, and, as is the case with the role of mountaineering's governing bodies, they can challenge existing notions. Whilst the relative success of mountaineering as a lifestyle sport is important to note, its experiences can act as a comparison for other similar sports including sailing, parkour or caving, which might adapt, or have adapted, to other economic pressures. Budd's comment that sport "clearly expresses the capitalist society surrounding it" is reflected in mountaineering just as much as in other well researched sports, and it remains to be seen whether it also applies to others that operated on a smaller scale.¹⁵

The examinations by Polley, Porter, Holt, Collins, Hardy and others into the professionalisation and commercialisation of sports in the post-war era have made considerable headway in allowing us to appreciate the economic transformation that they went through. This thesis has added to our recognition of this change in mountaineering, enabling us to better appreciate macro effects at play. Despite being niche by comparison, and an insular sub-culture in the pre-war period, mountaineering was still significantly transformed, and it is clear that it effectively grew its 'consumer base' in this era.

¹⁵ Adrian Budd, 'Capitalism, Sport and Resistance: Reflections', *Culture, Sport, Society* 4, no. 1 (2001), 15.

In some respects, it went further in responding to capitalist pressures, notably the potential for non-elite climbers to reach the world's highest summits and the reduction of public understanding despite an expansion of the audience. This has led to the previously authentic symbolism of summiting Mount Everest changing from a moment of major imperial significance, to one that reflects adventure tourism and commodification.

In Peter Donnelly's social analysis of British mountaineering he stated that each new generation of mountaineers reinvents the sport, a phenomenon which explains how climbing objectives and values have changed so markedly.¹⁶ His work was with particular reference to nineteenth-century changes, but as this thesis demonstrates, Donnelly's theory stands up to modern post-World War Two developments with economic concerns becoming the motivating factor. Perhaps though, mountaineering has evolved this way on a scale not witnessed by other sports, and it is evolving far quicker than the generational theory would suggest. Instead, it has transformed substantially from one *decade* to another, with changing participants, interests, expectations, ethics and motivations. The foundation for this acceleration was the transition of climbing as leisure to climbing as work. Despite the fact that the speed of change meant that for non-elite climbers it returned to a form of leisure once more, the adjustment was dramatic.

In the immediate post-war years, the likes of Joe Brown, Don Whillans and Chris Bonington were beginning to commodify the sport based on their own ambitions and achievements. They connected climbing to new media, and soon after to corporate partners. This was part of their deliberate intention to expand interest in climbing into the mainstream rather than just the sport's own sub-culture. Media and commercial partners drew in greater sums, and indirectly encouraged novelty. By the end of the twentieth-century, paying clients were attracted into the sport through its new game form, and they too affected how it was perceived. The nimbleness and flexibility of the sport in light

¹⁶ Peter Donnelly, 'Playing with Gravity: Mountains and Mountaineering', in *Sites of Sport: Space, Place, Experience*, eds. Patricia Vertinsky and John Bale, (London: Routledge, 2004), 131-144.

of these economic forces, coupled with entrepreneurial ideas and responsive companies, meant that the emerging modernising features were largely inevitable. Elite mountaineering should therefore be regarded as a sport that was very well attuned to, and capitalised on, economic opportunities in the post-war period.

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